

English Literature for Secondary Schools
General Editor :— J. H. FOWLER, M.A.

THE ISLE OF GRAMARYE
OR TALES OF OLD BRITAIN

PART II



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THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. URSULA

Frontispiece

The Isle of Gramarye

or

Tales of Old Britain

By
E. P. Roberts

"Where are the temples that in Britain's isle
To his paternal gods the Trojan raised?
Gone like a morning dream, or like a pile
Of clouds that in cerulean ether blazed."
WORDSWORTH.

PART II

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ILLUSTRATION

THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. URSULA. From the series of
miniatures painted by H. Memling on the Reliquary
in the Hospital of St. John at Bruges - *Frontispiece*

V

THE KINGS OF BRENTFORD.

I

"Our ancestor was that Molmutius which
 Ordained our laws . Molmutius
 Who was the first of Britain which did put
 His brows within a golden crown and call'd
 Himself a king."

SHAKESPEARE : *Cymbeline*.

"Of Brennius and Belinus, brothers bold "

MILTON

B.C. MANY boys and girls have seen King George's
402. crown blazing with historic gems behind the
 iron bars of its glass prison in the Jewel House in the
 Tower of London. It is a splendid symbol of a splen-
 did and most ancient kingdom, one of the oldest in
 the world. Not every king has a crown, but the
 King of England (or Loegria) has had one from time
 immemorial. The first coronation was that of
 Dunwallo Molmutius, a prince of Cornwall, who
 subdued all the other kings after a long and fierce
 civil war, and made himself sovereign lord of the
 whole island. To prevent further disputes he caused
 a golden circlet to be made and wore it on all State
 occasions as an outward and visible sign of his
 kingship.

The memory of this king was held in great veneration by the Britons, for he drew up a code of laws, known as the Molmutine Code, that were so wise that even King Alfred in later times was glad to copy them.

Molmutius and his good queen Conwenna had two sons; Belin, who, like his father, was prudent and peace-loving; and Bran or Brenn, who, also like his father, was tall, fair and handsome. He could play upon the harp and sing many songs; he excelled in hunting and fowling, but he was violent, faithless and cunning. The two brothers, however, grew up in great affection; though Brenn was his mother's favourite there was no jealousy between them, and it was not until the death of their father that the true character of the younger revealed itself.

Molmutius, when dying, left his crown and kingdom to his eldest-born, and Brenn, in his rage, would have plunged the whole country into war.

"Why should I not be a king like my brother?" he cried. "I will force him to share his inheritance with me!"

The wise men of the realm met together in alarm, remembering the terrible wars and murders caused by the quarrels of Ferrex and Porrex, that ended the royal line of Brut.

"Shall brother fight against brother like the sons of Gorboduc?" they asked in dismay. "The knife that Queen Widen plunged into the heart of Porrex slew not only her son but thousands of Britons besides. By every means in our power we must avert such bloodshed."

They tried to reason with the princes, and at last Belin consented to divide the island. It was agreed that Brenn should have all the land north the Humber, consisting of the provinces of Northumbria and Albany; and Belin all the south; also he should be the overlord or supreme king and wear the crown.

For five years all was peace, but Brenn was gradually growing discontented with his half of the island because much of it was so wild and barren. South of the Humber he saw cornfields and thriving cities, and his heart was full of envy of his brother; besides, he hated being subject to him.

About this time there landed in Albany an adventurer from Norway named Malgod. He was crafty and clever and soon obtained a place in the household of King Brenn, who took him into great favour. This mischief-maker, to serve some purpose of his own, did his best to stir up strife and to excite his master's discontent.

"What a shame it is," he would say, "that you should owe allegiance to your brother. You are far more kingly than he is and have many times proved yourself more valiant in battle: witness how you repelled the invasion of Cheulf, chief of the Morini. Why are you so slothful as to submit tamely to the overlordship of King Belin, when by birth you are equal to him, being the son of the same father and mother? Rouse yourself, then, and compel him to make a fairer treaty with you."

Brenn was only too ready to listen to evil counsel, yet he replied:

"That is all very well : but see how few fighting-men I possess and how little treasure, while my brother has silver and gold in plenty and thousands of warriors at his command. If I invade his territory I shall surely be overcome and, it may be, lose not only land but life itself."

"Then why not make an alliance with my king, Alfinge ? " answered Malgod. "He is rich and powerful, and has, moreover, a fair daughter named Delgan ; he would no doubt give her to you in marriage with a fleet of ships for her dowry, manned by hardy Norsemen, so that you could invade your brother's kingdom by water."

"But the fair Delgan, as I have heard, is already betrothed to Godlac, King of the Danes," objected Brenn.

"Nay, I know it for a truth," answered Malgod, "that King Alfinge has a quarrel with Godlac, and would fain bestow his daughter elsewhere. Hasten over to Norway, therefore, unknown to Belin, and boldly demand her in marriage."

Other lords, longing to pillage the towns and farms of Loegria, gave the same advice. In the end Brenn was persuaded, and sailed away secretly for Norway, leaving his kingdom in charge of these rash friends. But Belin, the wise and wary, soon got news of his departure and guessed his intentions.

"Woe to the brother that betrays the other ! " he exclaimed, and determined to be beforehand with the traitor. He marched up to Northumbria and seized upon that province ; he manned its strong castles

with his own followers and set watchers along the coast to give him timely warning of Brenn's return.

All this time Brenn, who had arrived at the court of Norway, was doing his best to win King Alfinge's friendship by his handsome looks and lordly airs. He boldly pressed his suit, boasting of the vastness of his dominions.

"I am king of half Britain," he said ; " but with the help of a fleet of ships well manned and well equipped, I will make your daughter queen of the whole island."

Alfinge listened readily to his proposal and was proud to accept him as a son-in-law. But the fair Delgan regarded her new suitor very scornfully ; his fine looks and speeches had no charm for her, for she dearly loved King Godlac who had lately come to Norway to seek her in marriage. Alfinge, who, for some reason, hated the Danes, had dismissed his suit very harshly, but the lovers lived in hope that he would relent some day. They had secretly plighted their troth, and before leaving for Denmark Godlac had given the princess a ring of gold richly wrought.

Delgan was filled with dismay when one day her father sent for her into his presence and informed her that he had bestowed her hand upon the splendid young king of North Britain.

" Since I may not wed King Godlac, grant at least that I may remain unmarried," she pleaded.

" What idle fancies are these ? " asked the old king angrily, and bade her get her bridal clothes ready, for the marriage was to take place without delay.

Brenn rejoiced greatly at having gained a queen of such renowned beauty, but he rejoiced still more at the sight of the tall, fine ships assembling in the harbour. He was so absorbed in hurrying forward the building and victualling of his fleet that he never noticed the sorrowful, averted looks of his shrinking bride.

The fair Delgan shed bitter tears as, sitting at her chamber window, she gazed over the dark-grey sea or watched the tall pine trunks being hauled along the quay while the axes and hammers were ringing in the shipbuilders' yards, and her maidens were filling her dower chests with rich stuffs. The days slipped by and the preparations neared completion. At last, with a desperate courage she called a faithful servant to her and entrusted him with a letter and her betrothal ring, bidding him travel by night and day to Denmark and give them into the hands of King Godlac himself.

"Greeting I send thee with my golden ring," she wrote; "in three days I must set out for Britain in a ship with a silken sail. Nevermore may I speak with thee, never see thy face again. Ever mayst thou farewell."

The dreaded day of departure arrived and the waters of the harbour were covered with a fleet of seven hundred ships. Brenn was in such hot haste to return to Albany that it seemed to him that he had been away for many years instead of only a few months, and now that the wind was favourable no entreaties could prevail upon him to remain a day longer in

Norway. Queen Delgan with her maidens and chests of treasure was in her own bark, furnished with a sail of purple silk; Alfinge, who had come down to the quay, gave her his blessing, and with a fair wind King Brenn steered his course for the south-west.

In the meantime the faithful messenger had travelled by night and day till he came to Denmark. He hastened into the presence of King Godlac, whom he found seated in his chair of State surrounded by his vikings. The royal lover turned pale as he recognized the betrothal ring, but when he read the fateful words: "In three days I must set out for Britain," he fell off his throne in a deep swoon. There was a well in the courtyard and one of his attendants ran and drew some water, which they sprinkled in his face. He gradually revived, and raising himself up, he cried:

"Which of my bold sea-rovers will sail with me to the rescue of my princess?" He was answered by a joyful chorus; for the Danes, like their Norwegian neighbours, loved nothing better than a chase after the enemy and a fight at the end of it. Many of their ships were already out at sea, but fortunately Godlac had just had a fine new one built. It was richly carved and gilded, with a dragon at the beak, and at dawn the next day with only forty sail he put out in pursuit.

With a favouring breeze they steered for Norway, hoping to encounter King Brenn before he left Stavanger; but they were too late, and the Norwegian fleet was half across the North Sea before they descried

it with all canvas spread, like a flock of white sea-birds skimming over the waters.

The breeze had freshened to a gale that drove the Danes rapidly forward ; dark clouds hid the sun, the waves rose high ; but Godlac, undismayed by the gathering storm and the seven hundred ships of the enemy, stood with hair blown back at the prow of his vessel, his face alight with joy, for his keen blue eyes had sighted the sailcloth of purple silk.

“ That is the Queen’s ship ! ” he cried, pointing with outstretched hand ; “ whoever captures it shall earn my everlasting love and gratitude ! ”

With the south-easter behind them they bore down upon the Norwegian fleet and perceived the fair Delgan on the deck of the silk-sailed ship, holding out her arms to her beloved and caring no more for the heaving of the billows than if she had been on land, for she was a true sea-king’s daughter.

Godlac himself was the first to get alongside. Quick as thought he flung out his grappling hooks and sprang on board. The two barks rocked together on the waves as he seized the princess, who fell into his arms, “ glad at heart.” Swinging his axe in his right hand as he grasped his prize with his left, he hewed down her attendants who tried to snatch her from him.

King Brenn, sailing ahead in his admiral, beheld all this from afar and turned to do battle for his bride, but a sudden squall caught his sails and kept him struggling in powerless rage while Godlac carried off the fair Delgan under his very eyes and set her

down in his own vessel in the midst of his shipmates. The wind tore at the grappling irons and wrenched the two ships asunder once more; and Godlac, thus freed, would have fled in all haste back to Denmark, but Brenn, who had by this time righted his sails, bore down upon him, furiously calling upon his Norsemen to destroy the pirates utterly.

A fierce battle ensued, "ship ran against ship, beak against beak, the weaker keeled and shivered all to pieces." But the fury of man was no match for the fury of the wind that rose to a hurricane and scattered Norwegian and Danish fleets alike far and wide over the North Sea. Godlac found himself surrounded with wrecks and sinking craft, but the violence of the tempest drove him still forward. It seemed as if his own sound timbered bark could not live much longer in such a sea, "for the waves rolled on high like flames of fire"; so he took an axe and severed her mast in two, though much it angered him to do so, and let her drift.

The storm gradually abated, and for five days and nights they tossed up and down the ocean in continual terror till at last they were washed up on an unknown shore. Utterly exhausted, drenched, half-starving, Godlac and his princess dragged themselves to land with the survivors of their company, in great apprehension as to what sort of a country this might be. Their fears were increased as two men of stern aspect approached and addressed them in a strange speech:

"You are all dead men unless you tell us whence you come and what you seek."

One of the Danes understood his language and interpreted. Godlac, anxious for the safety of his beloved, bade him answer with fair words :

"We are sea-weary men from Denmark, driven hither by stress of weather, and we know not to what land we are come nor who is its lord. Lead us to him, dear friends, that we may speak with him."

"His name," they answered, "is King Belin, and this is the province of Northumbria," little thinking that they saw before them the very lady who should have been its queen. These men were two of the watchers that Belin had placed along the coast, and as their master was encamped only a few miles off, they conducted the seafarers to his tent.

King Belin was a genial soul, and at first spoke to them very kindly, in pity of their forlorn condition.

"This lady is Delgan the Fair," said Godlac presenting the princess who stood beside him in her discoloured, clinging garments with her lank, wet hair hanging down her wan cheeks. Belin stared incredulous at the hollow-eyed damsel before him, but when Godlac and his companions had related the story of their misfortunes his face changed and he could hardly conceal his delight. Despite her woe-begone looks, this was, without doubt, the princess of Norway and his brother's bride ! Was it by chance or the favour of the gods that the sea had cast up this unexpected prize upon his shores ?

"Give me a ship and grant us leave to sail back to Denmark," craved Godlac, "and I will pay you a

yearly tribute of three hundred pounds of silver." But Belin shook his head. Only the day before some Norwegian sailors had been wrecked on the same part of the coast, and they had reported that, as far as they knew, King Brenn was not drowned, for they had seen his admiral holding its course for Albany. If the traitor still lived, thought Belin, this lady was a hostage more precious than bushels of gold; so, assuming a stern expression, he called for some of his guards, and to their consternation the prisoners were led away and shut up in a strong castle under the strictest watch and ward.

A few days later a horseman came spurring into the camp with a letter which he presented to King Belin. It was from Brenn himself and ran as follows: "Restore to me my queen and my province of Northumbria; deliver the King of the Danes over to my vengeance, or I will ravage the whole island from sea to sea and I will slay you too, whenever and wherever I can get at you."

"Ride back to your master for your pains," commanded Belin grimly, and deigned no other answer, for he had sixty thousand men well armed.

King Brenn had, in fact, landed safely in Albany with four hundred out of his seven hundred ships. Malgod and his friends came to meet him with their followers, but in the midst of their warlike preparations King Belin with his sixty thousand marched through Albany like a whirlwind and fell upon them in the forest of Coilador, or Cawdor.

This was the largest assembly of troops ever seen in

Britain, and the battle that followed was the most terrible yet known, for the wounded fell like swathes of corn before the reaper's sickle. It lasted all day long, and at sunset Brenn, with Belin at his heels, fled away to his ships. He reached them just in time to scramble into the nearest, with twelve of his knights, and hoisted sail for Gaul, caring nothing for the fate of the Norsemen whom he had led away from their homes. Of those miserable ones who had survived the slaughter some hid in the woods and caves, others skulked about the coast, hoping to get a ship, but very few of all that stalwart company ever returned to Norway.

King Belin gave a feast in his city of Caer Ebrauc (York) in honour of his victory and he wore his royal crown as he sat at the head of the table. When all this rejoicing was over he called a council of nobles to decide what should be done with the King of the Danes; for Godlac had sent urgent messages from his prison, imploring Belin to set him free with the princess and offering ten times the tribute money so they might have a safe conduct back to Denmark.

"Release them," they all agreed. "Of what value are such captives, since Brenn is now an exile and a wanderer and will never come back to trouble the land of Britain?"

The jolly king was of the same opinion. Now that he had vanquished his brother and regained the northern half of the island, he was feeling at peace with all the world; besides, he could not resist the

offer of the tribute money, for next to land, he loved gold and silver.

Thus Godlac, the faithful lover, was set at liberty and his beloved lady was restored to him.

"Thou art most fair, my sweet," he exclaimed, clasping her in his arms, "but thou hast cost me very dear."

King Belin furnished them with a ship, and shortly afterwards they set sail for Denmark, where, let us hope, they lived happily ever after.

II

BRENN, as we have said, hoisted sail for Gaul. He dared not return to Norway and confess to King Alfinge that, far from fulfilling his boast that he would make the Fair Delgan queen of all Britain, he had left her a captive in King Belin's strongest castle. The old sea-king would surely slay him in his wrath. So he wandered over the land of Gaul with his twelve knights, tormented with rage and grief for having listened to the evil counsels of Malgod. He had lost wife, kingdom, ships and treasure; worst of all, he had made his hated brother more prosperous than ever!

He went from court to court of the various dukes of Gaul, begging them for men and ships to regain his lost dominions, but in vain; they all turned a deaf ear to his entreaties. At last he arrived at the city of Seguin, Duke of the Allobroges, an old and very powerful chief of Burgundy, who possessed a

great hoard of gold and silver stored up in his treasure-house. Though as obdurate as all his peers, he received the exiles very kindly and allowed Brenn to stay in his household as an honoured guest.

The crafty Brenn, seeing his opportunity, exerted all his arts to please his generous host ; he played his sweetest songs to his harp and told his merriest tales. The old Duke was delighted to find such a pleasant companion and took him into special favour ; for he had lately lost his only son, and this stranger, with his graceful accomplishments, helped to beguile his sorrow. Whenever he went out hunting or hawking, Brenn rode at his side ; he bade him sit beside him at the banquet, and leaned upon his shoulder at the council board. Such unusual marks of affection might well be displeasing to the nobles, but Brenn was careful to assume a very mild and gracious manner. Seguin made him many rich presents, but instead of keeping them to himself he gave most of them away again in his lordly, free-handed fashion, and thus avoided exciting any jealousy.

The Duke grew to love him like his own son, and whenever Brenn talked of taking his leave, he always begged him to stay on. At last, in order to keep his favourite always near him, he offered him his daughter in marriage with a rich dowry. Since the Fair Delgan was lost to him for ever, Brenn was only too glad to marry Duke Seguin's daughter, whom he loved far better than he had ever loved his sorrowful Norwegian bride.

He was now the Duke's son-in-law and lived in

great state, giving sumptuous entertainments to the nobles and bestowing his bounty lavishly upon the poor. The people loved him so much, and the nobles were so jealous of each other, that when Seguin died leaving all his treasure to his daughter and her husband, they with one consent elected Brenn as their new duke.

So, from being a homeless wanderer Brenn became one of the most powerful rulers in Gaul, but he was not even yet content. All the years that had passed had not lessened his hatred of his brother, nor his longing for revenge ; and his chief delight in his new dukedom was the prospect it afforded him of invading Britain once more.

He knew the Allobrogian nobles well by this time ; their ruling passion was love of plunder, and he artfully excited their covetousness by describing the immense riches of Belin's island-kingdom with its fat meadows and its twenty-eight flourishing cities. At Troynovant, he boasted, there was feasting all day long ! Thousands of sheep and oxen were slaughtered daily, wine and ale flowed like water, and the doors of the King's house stood always open so that every passer-by could enter and help himself. Indeed there was such abundance that many died of nothing else but over-eating.

It made the mouths of the poorer folk water to think of all this good cheer, while the nobles gloated over the thought of the rich spoils to be obtained by the sack of such a city. Every man should have his fair share of the booty, said their wily duke, and

by such promises he persuaded the greedy Allobroges to join him in making war upon his brother.

Ever since the Battle of Coilador, King Belin had ruled over Britain in great peace and plenty. He loved ease and jollity far better than fighting, but, though renowned for the splendour of his house-keeping, he was very strict in maintaining the Molmutine Laws, and was very keen on encouraging arts and industries. In the midst of such prosperity people gave but little thought to Brenn, taking it for granted that he was either dead or reduced to beggary, and they were much surprised when they heard of Duke Seguin's hospitality to him; when the news came of his marriage with Seguin's daughter, King Belin and his wise men looked very grave, but when further news reached them that he had been chosen Duke of the Allobroges, they felt very anxious indeed.

Another year went by, and great was the consternation when scouts came running to tell the King that ten thousand men had landed upon the south coast and were marching upon Troynovant. It was Brenn and his Allobroges.

Belin the King rose from the feast and became once more the stern warrior; the minstrels stopped their harping in dismay as he issued his orders in a voice of thunder and sent messengers flying in all directions to summon his nobles. All was bustle and hurrying to and fro at Troynovant: the air resounded with the clang of hammers and the darkness was lit up with the red glow of fires as the armourers and blacksmiths plied their work all night long.

But the widowed queen, Conwenna, sat alone, sorrowing over the miseries of the coming war. She was growing old, but grief rather than age had furrowed her cheeks and whitened her hair. She had mourned for her good husband Molmutius, but it was the quarrels of her two sons that had embittered her later years. The terrible battle of Coilador seemed to her but as yesterday, and she dreaded the awful slaughter that would again devastate the land. Perhaps she herself would be childless, for she knew Brenn's revengeful temper and felt sure that, this time, he would not flee but would stay and fight his brother to the death.

Of her two sons she loved Brenn the best, but she was too wise not to acknowledge that he was entirely to blame for all this dissension. She longed to look upon his face again, for it was seven long years since she had seen him. At all hazards she must embrace him while his hands were yet unstained with his brother's blood.

"Thou canst not come with me," said Belin in answer to her entreaties. "Stay thou in the city with the women and children; thou art too old and feeble to face such dangers."

At dawn the next day he marched out of the city with his troops, but Queen Conwenna followed them from afar, barefoot and dressed in a ragged kirtle. She had smeared her skin the colour of sunburn, and looked so like a poor peasant woman that no one tried to hinder her.

They marched towards the west for about ten miles

or so till they came upon the Allobroges encamped upon the banks of a little river which they had just forded. The leaders forthwith drew up their armies in battle array and prepared for the tug of war.

Conwenna made her way to the ranks of the Allobroges, and her eyes roved vainly from one captain to another in search of her son. She learnt from one of the common soldiers that their duke was in his tent, arming for the fight. So with trembling steps she made her way to the chief pavilion and waited about unnoticed till the canvas parted and the Duke issued forth in the full panoply of war. A superb warrior he looked, for he stood higher by a head than any man near him, and he walked with the haughty mien of one born to command. The Allobroges were proud to have such a chief to lead them in battle, and hailed him with shouts and cheers.

But Conwenna saw only her son Brenn.

She darted swiftly forward and flung herself upon his breast, calling him by many fond, childish names, while the tears rolled down her cheeks. Brenn at first shrank back in anger, but as he recognized the beloved face, though so worn and changed, and heard the well-remembered voice, he clasped her in his arms, unheeding the astonished looks of his captains.

In spite of his hard and selfish nature he still loved his mother tenderly, and being taken wholly by surprise, he had not time to check his first glad, boyish impulse. He bowed his head and raised her face to his, while she stayed the yearning of her heart by kissing him again and again. For a long time they

hardly spoke except in broken murmurs, but at last she lifted her head and said in tones of gentle reproach :

“ Fair son Brenn, why art thou come from a strange land to destroy thine own and to slay thine only brother ? What wrong has he done thee ? The quarrel was not of his seeking : it is thou who hast done wrong, for it was thou who didst first rebel against him and didst trust in the help of the King of Norway. If thou art banished from thy kingdom is it not thine own fault ? Of what then hast thou to complain, since thou hast found another kingdom and art equal to thy brother ? ”

He would have interrupted her, but she went on :

“ I am thy mother who nursed thee at this breast ; by all the pains and griefs that I have suffered for thee, I charge thee put down thy lance and shield.”

Brenn answered nothing, but his eyes looked at her as they used to look when he was a little boy and she was chiding him for some childish fault.

“ Fair son Brenn,” she pleaded, “ pardon thy brother and he will pardon thee. Dead is thy father, old is thy mother ; thou should’st rather come in peace to give joy to her and to thy friends who have not seen thee for so many years.”

Still he was silent.

“ Fair son Brenn,” she implored, “ bring not this crowning sorrow on my old age.”

Brenn stood irresolute ; her words stirred up strange, forgotten feelings ; old memories were surging in his heart, and his hatred of his brother seemed dissolving like a lump of ice in that warm tide.

He and Belin were boys again, playing round her knee. . . .

His lance had fallen to the ground, and Conwenna with feeble fingers strove to unfasten the massive buckle of his swordbelt. Gently putting her hand aside, he wrenched it asunder, and gave both sword and shield to his armour-bearer who was standing near.

"Come," said his mother, taking him by the hand while the Allobrogian host looked on in wonder.

They turned towards the British line of battle, and when King Belin saw them approaching he left his chariot and came running to meet them, gazing from one to the other in questioning surprise: first at Brenn standing quite unarmed with humbled looks, and then at his mother's ragged attire. She was smiling radiantly through her tears.

"Is it peace?" he asked.

"Forgive me, my brother," said Brenn, holding out his arms. The good-natured Belin never bore malice. Though easily roused to anger, no one was more ready to bury all ill-feeling; besides he had no real love of war. Touched by such words from his proud, rebellious brother, he too flung aside his weapons, and, clasping Brenn in a warm embrace, kissed him on both cheeks.

So all was peace and good-will. The Britons shouted for joy and blessed the name of Queen Conwenna; and even the Allobroges, though disappointed of their promised plunder, could not refrain from cheering.

At the command of their duke they laid down their arms, Gauls and Britons made friends, and the two armies, led by the brothers, marched to Troy-novant, where Belin gave a royal feast such as his soul loved. Outside the castle, barrels were broached and oxen roasted whole for the soldiery, and there was as much rejoicing as if they had gained a great victory; indeed Belin much preferred this way of vanquishing his enemies.

To commemorate this happy reconciliation Belin changed the name of the river that the Allobroges forded to the Bran or Brenn; the town that afterwards rose on this spot was long known as Branford, but is now Brentford; and the story of the Kings of Brentford was the subject of many a play and pageant.

Now I wish this story could end here, but the monkish chroniclers who never seem happier than when telling of battles and bloodshed have invented fresh adventures for the brothers. They relate that Brenn, to pacify his Allobroges for the loss of British spoils, led them over the Alps for the conquest of Italy, and that Belin accompanied him. Readers of Roman history will remember how the Romans were defeated by a shattering charge of the Gauls on the banks of the river Alia, and how a Gaulish chief named Brennus compelled the proud Romans to pay him a heavy weight of gold, exclaiming as he flung his sword-belt into the scales "Woe to the vanquished!" Well, according to the chronicler and his translator, Geoffrey, this chief was no other than our British

prince! But as we have only their word for all this, we can believe what we like.

King Belin returned home laden with rich spoils, and henceforward remained in Britain where he ruled in great peace and prosperity. He founded the city of Caerleon-upon-Usk, and laid out four great highways, including Watling Street and the Great North Road, which the Romans afterwards rebuilt. He also built a high tower on the banks of the Thames with a quay for ships, and a new gate to the city of Troynovant, called after himself Parth Belin or Belin's Gate (Billingsgate).

He loved feasting and jollity, but maintained such good laws that his people looked upon him as their father. Great was the mourning when he died. His body was burnt and the ashes enclosed in a golden urn which, with wonderful art, was placed at the top of his high tower, so that all wayfarers passing by road or river, could see it flashing in the sunlight and be reminded of Good King Belin.

VI.

THE PIOUS ELIDUR.

“ Thus was a brother by a brother saved
With whom a crown .
'Gainst duty weigh'd and faithful love did seem
A thing of no esteem
And from this triumph of affection pure
He bore the name of Pious Ehdur ”

WORDSWORTH.

B.C. THERE was once upon a time a king of 322 ? Britain named Arthgallo, who, in the beginning of his reign, showed great wisdom, but unfortunately he let himself be overcome by his ruling passion, which was love of riches. It made him not only very covetous, but tyrannical and cruel : for he was constantly finding pretexts for punishing his subjects in order to seize upon their land and gold.

At last the chief men of the realm rose in rebellion and deposed the tyrant, who fled away in terror with a following of only ten knights, and with one consent his life was declared forfeit.

Arthgallo had a younger brother named Elidur, a very amiable young prince beloved by high and low ; he was chosen to fill the vacant throne, and ruled in peace and moderation for nearly five years. Nothing

was heard of Arthgallo after the first year or two ; he was known to have fled to Gaul, but gradually all reports about him ceased, and it was generally believed that he was dead.

But Arthgallo was still alive though reduced to the direst poverty. He wandered about from court to court, but all the princes of Gaul to whom he appealed refused to listen to his petition, and sometimes these rebuffs were accompanied by scornful words that cut him to the heart. Death, he felt, would be preferable to begging at rich men's tables. So, at the peril of their lives, he and his companions returned to Britain. They took refuge in the forest of Calaterium in Yorkshire, then very wild and unfrequented, where they hoped to be safe from discovery. They lived by snaring game, and upon such roots and berries as the woods afforded. Though it was a pleasant life enough in summer time, their sufferings were very great when the winter came on and icy blasts shook the leafless trees. Famished and perishing with cold, the exiles just managed to find enough food and shelter to keep themselves alive. They built log-huts, and made cloaks of the skins of wolf and deer which they fastened with thorns to hide their threadbare clothes. Few who had known the haughty Arthgallo in his days of splendour would have recognized him in this rude attire, unkempt and unshorn amid his gaunt band of knights. Readers of "As You Like It" will at once remember how the Banished Duke in the Forest of Arden, smiled at the biting winds and found good in everything ; but Arthgallo had not

his philosophy, and was always lamenting his misfortunes.

One day the joyous sound of horn and hounds re-echoed through the forest and a hunting party burst into view. The outlaws concealed themselves behind the massive trunks of the trees and watched the cavalcade as it swept through the glade. Arthgallo recognized many of his former enemies among the throng; one of the hunters rode a splendid horse, richly caparisoned, that swerved a little to one side, and as the face of its rider was thus turned full towards him, he perceived that it was his brother Elidur's.

What bitter feelings stirred the breast of the fallen tyrant as the King passed by, so near that the royal mantle got caught on a branch of the great oak behind which he was hiding! Elidur reined up to pull it free and at that moment he saw his brother. Their mutual eyes met; changed as the face of Arthgallo was, Elidur knew him; he started and half called him by name, yet repressed the cry and, making a sign with his hand as if to enjoin silence, rode on his way.

"He rides off in triumph at beholding my misery," exclaimed the exile to his companions, in shame and rage. Yet it was an ungenerous thought: Elidur, far from feeling any triumph, was sad at heart. Though, it is true, he had made no effort to succour him, he had grieved over his banished brother, never imagining that he could be roving so near his own castle gates; but the sight of that haggard face made

him realize for the first time all the wretchedness of an outlaw's lot.

"I shall hunt no more to-day," he said to his attendants, and rode back to Alclud (Aldborough), his castle near York.

That evening as he sat at supper before a board loaded with good cheer, he could scarcely eat, and sent away the savoury dishes untasted, for he was thinking:

"Why should I live here in the midst of plenty when my brother has, perhaps, hardly a morsel of bread?"

At night when he lay warmly covered in his spacious bed-chamber, he could not sleep

"Alas," he thought, "Arthgallo has no couch but the bare ground and no blanket but his deer-skin."

His remorse for having taken his brother's place upon the throne gave him no peace; yet he said no word to his nobles of what was passing in his mind, well knowing that their anger against their late king had by no means subsided, and that they would certainly seek his life did they hear of his return. Elidur watched his opportunity and a few days later he, with one or two trusty lords of his household, left Alclud and rode into the forest. They came upon the outlaws unawares; Arthgallo would have fled, but Elidur, springing from his horse, clasped him in a brotherly embrace. The other drew back in surprise, with looks of sullen distrust

"Surely," said Elidur, "it is some kindly spirit that has guided my path into this grove; surely it is by the will of the heavenly powers that we meet again. I have mourned for thee and thought thee

dead, but since thou art still alive it is but just that I should restore thy crown and sceptre."

"Do not mock me," cried Arthgallo resentfully. "I sought this forest as a safe retreat, and you have found me only to rejoice over my ill-fortune, destitute as I am and stripped of lands and titles. You talk of restoring my crown! If I could, I would have wrenched it from you by force. Had there been any justice among foreign princes I would have come with an army and (who knows?) I would have slain you as a traitor."

"Brother," answered the younger gently, hurt by this repulse, "why do you answer me in this defiant spirit? By Diana herself I swear I had not thought of rejoicing over your misfortunes. I grieve over them; luxury and pomp are hateful to me so long as you are in poverty." Hereupon he unfastened the silver clasps of his furred mantle and placed it on his brother's shoulders, saying: "If this were my crimson robe of State it should be yours, and if this boar-spear were my sceptre I would place it in your hands."

Arthgallo looked into the young face with astonishment, for such generosity was incomprehensible to his meaner nature; he felt ashamed that Elidur should be so far above him; as far, it seemed, as the soaring eagle is above the sordid worm.

"Beware of me!" he cried at last. "How do you know I am to be trusted? If the crown were placed upon my head once more, who knows how I might revenge myself? Are you not afraid lest I

should put you to death, once I had you in my power, for usurping my throne so long ?”

“ I am not afraid,” answered Elidur, smiling sadly, “ and if you are truly penitent I will, by the help of the gods, usurp it no longer.”

“ Do not kindle false hopes,” interrupted Arthgallo despondently. “ The nobles will never again receive me as their king.”

“ Nay, we can but try,” the other answered eagerly. “ First pledge me your word that you will atone for former wrongs by ruling with the wisdom of your early years. In the beginning of your reign you were as mild and just as Gorbonian, our elder brother ; but the love of riches gradually crept upon you, making you avaricious and cruel. Give me this promise and I pledge myself to resign the kingly office.”

The brothers interchanged solemn vows, calling upon the gods to witness them.

“ We must walk circumspectly,” said Elidur, knowing that the task he had set himself was no light one. “ Dismiss your knights therefore, and come with me,” he proceeded, giving him a sum of money to relieve the necessities of these faithful men. Arthgallo, having distributed the gold, bade them farewell ; then, at the king’s bidding, he put on the dress of one of the royal attendants.

At dusk the king returned to Alclud with Arthgallo thus disguised, and led him into his own bed-chamber which none but his trusted chamberlains ever entered. Here, unsuspected by the rest of the

household, the exile lay concealed for several weeks, until he had quite recovered from the privations of his out-door life. The two princes had many talks together, and Elidur perceived that Arthgallo's heart was changed ; his pride was humbled ; sad experience had taught him a sense of justice and made him feel pity for the sufferings of others.

But the nobles would never believe in such a change, and they sternly refused to listen when Elidur, to test their feeling in the matter, proposed recalling his banished brother.

After turning over many plans in his mind, Elidur devised a stratagem which would not now be considered honourable, but which, in those days when might was right, gained him great praise and admiration.

The people heard with consternation that their good King Elidur had fallen very sick, and, as he had no son, the nobles were summoned to his dying bed in order that he might name his successor.

On the appointed day the chief vassals of the crown assembled in the hall at Alclud. The king was much worse, said the chamberlains ; he was suffering from great pain in his head and could not endure the slightest noise, so they must all tread very softly and could only be admitted one at a time into the sick-room.

The Duke of Cornwall, who was of royal blood, entered first, half hoping that he would be the one chosen to succeed. He composed his countenance to a becoming expression of quiet grief which soon

turned to one of astonishment as he looked around. He had expected to find the king prostrate, propped up with pillows ; but there was no bed, no sick man. He saw instead the ivory chair of State on which Arthgallo was seated, majestic as of yore, attired in royal robes. Elidur, who was standing by his side, had no appearance of ill-health, and in the background there was a group of armed men.

The duke looked from one brother to another in bewilderment and then at the grim battle-axes.

"Here is my successor," said Elidur sternly. "Kneel down and swear allegiance to your lawful king."

But the duke, who had been the foremost rebel, looked defiantly at Arthgallo, who met his gaze with regal dignity. Elidur explained his reason for wishing to resign, but even then the duke refused to obey, and remaining standing, stiff and unyielding.

"Kneel down and swear," commanded Elidur imperiously, "or my sergeants shall strike off your head."

At a sign from him two of the men-at-arms came forward and raised their weapons. The duke glanced around him, and he saw that he was helpless, for the door through which he had come was now barred with swords ; so, in fear of his life, he fell on his knees and swore fealty to Arthgallo. He turned to go, but armed men hurried him forward into a room beyond, where he was detained apart until all the other vassals had been entrapped in a similar manner and compelled to take the oath of allegiance.

A council was called a few days later, and the nobles, though at first enraged at the treatment they had received at Elidur's hands, could not help admiring his brotherly love, so far beyond anything they had heard or imagined. According to their code an oath, even though extorted by trickery, was considered binding; and as Arthgallo, on his part, swore to maintain the Molmutine Laws, they agreed to restore him to the throne.

Shortly afterwards, at a great assembly of the people at York, Elidur, still wearing his kingly robes, appeared on the castle wall with Arthgallo by his side. The trumpets blew, proclaiming the newly restored king, and when silence again reigned, Elidur in the sight of the multitude, took off his crimson mantle and laid it on Arthgallo's shoulders; he placed the sceptre in his hand and the crown of Molmutius on his head; then, falling on his knees, he kissed his sovereign's hand in token of allegiance.

The people applauded to the echo, hardly knowing which to admire the most, the noble bearing of Arthgallo or the self-sacrifice of Elidur.

Henceforward this prince was known by the surname of the Pious because of his brotherly love, and Arthgallo by the wisdom of his new reign never caused him to regret his great renunciation. Ten years passed away in great prosperity, and, when Arthgallo died at Carlisle, Elidur was again chosen king.

VII.

CAESAR'S SWORD.

(An Incident in the Britons' Account of the First Roman Invasion)

"A kind of conquest
 Caesar made here, but made not here his brag
 Of 'came and saw and overcame'; with shame
 (The first that ever touched him) he was carried
 From off our coast
 for joy whereof
 The fam'd Cassibelaun, who was once at point
 (Oh, giglot fortune !) to master Caesar's sword,
 Made Lud Town with rejoicing fires burn bright
 And Britons strut with courage "

SHAKESPEARE : *Cymbeline*.

"But lost his sword, yet to be seen this day."

SPENSER: *Faery Queene.*

B.C. CAESAR, standing one day on the coast of

55. Belgic Gaul, between Calais and Boulogne, looked out across the Narrow Sea. It was clear summer weather and he could descry white cliffs rising majestically to the clouds. Calling one of his Gaulish legionaries to him he inquired of the man if he knew the name of that land, its king and people.

"That, Caesar," answered the man, "is a great island called Britain, full of fish and fowl and doughty warriors, and the name of their chief king is Caswallon, a brother of the renowned King Lud."

"By Hercules!" exclaimed the great general, "Now I bethink me, Brennus and his brother Belinus who overran Italy were also kings of Britain. I will avenge the shame that Brennus put upon my ancestors by compelling these Britons to pay tribute and obedience to the Senate of Rome."

"As I have heard," said another legionary, "they are descended from the ancient Trojans."

Caesar at first looked incredulous and then remarked :

"Why, then, we Romans and these Britons are of the same stock, but, if I mistake not, they are very degenerate from us, seeing they lie in the outer ocean, sundered from the rest of the world, and may easily be conquered. But first we must send them word so that, haply, we may avoid shedding the blood of our kinsmen."

So he bade one of his secretaries write a letter addressed to King Cassibelaunus (for so he latinized the name), demanding toll and tallage in the name of the Senate of Rome. A messenger (perhaps Commius the Atrebatian) at once set sail and in due time arrived at Troynovant with his missive.

Troynovant however was now called *Caer Lud* (or *Lud Town*), after the late king. *Lud* had been a genial, jolly monarch, very like Good King Belin, for he kept open house and was bountiful in giving feasts. He built new walls round the city with forty towers and a fine new gate known as the *Parth Lud* (*Lud Gate*), afterwards adorned with statues of himself and his two sons. These princes, *Androgeus* and

Tenuantius had both been children at the time of their father's death, so Caswallon was chosen to succeed. Caswallon was a very noble and valiant prince, but he was exceeded by his youngest brother, Nennius, who was not only a great warrior but renowned for his love of learning. He was engaged in writing a history of his people, dating from the time of Brut; he gloried in the memory of Troy and was much grieved that Lud should change the name of the ancient city. But Lud had thought more about his own glory, and the two brothers had had a very bitter quarrel on the subject, that had only ended with the King's death.

When Caesar's letter arrived, Caswallon sent for Nennius the scholar to read and translate it, for it was written in Greek as befitted their common ancestry. This language (though in a corrupt form) was still understood by priests and learned men, and they still employed the Greek character in writing. Nennius therefore was able to read the letter without much difficulty, but long before he reached the end Caswallon snatched it from his hand and dashed it to the ground in a passion, for such demands were an intolerable insult to the people of Britain.

"Does not the same noble blood beat in the hearts of Roman and Briton alike?" he stormed. "Yet he asks us to endure the yoke of perpetual bondage!" And he commanded Nennius to draw up a reply, daring Caesar to do his worst.

"You will find us ready to fight for our country and to defend our freedom to the last gasp," he

dictated, "and we would withstand even the gods themselves should they think to snatch it from us, for bowing the neck to slavery is a thing wholly unknown among the Britons."

While writing these brave words Nennius could not repress a feeling of eager satisfaction at the prospect of measuring swords with those wonderful Roman legions of which he had heard so much; for Britons were continually going over to Gaul to help the various tribes in their wars and brought back amazing reports of the military skill and engineering feats of the unconquerable Roman chief.

No time was to be lost, for the summer was advancing and it seemed likely that Caesar, on receipt of this defiant letter, would set sail with the first fair wind. Caswallon hastily gathering together such troops as he had near at hand, sent them on ahead under the command of Belin his most trusted general, to keep a look-out on the cliffs of Kent. In the meantime messengers were flying in all directions, summoning his under-kings and chiefs to assemble with their followers at Trinovantum by the beginning of August.

The pleasant leasowes of what we now call Hertfordshire were turned into a vast encampment as the clans came marching in swart Ivernians and wild tribes from the west in all the glory of blue war-paint, accompanied by their druids in white flowing robes; and the choleric-eyed free-born Britons with their flaming hair and shaven chins. The Britons of Loegria wore tunics of bright varie-

gated colours, and cloaks fastened on the shoulder with brooches of gold or coral. Some had amber, some golden armlets and necklaces; their scabbards were of exquisite workmanship (though the sword inside left much to be desired in strength and sharpness), and their shields of burnished bronze were marvels of beauty.

It was a scene of hurry, shouting and confusion, for the Britons could do nothing quietly. With a clatter of weapons and a glitter of metal the chiefs dashed up in their red chariots drawn by horses whose harness-rings and copper breast-plates jingled and clashed as they raced along. The kings of Albany and of North and South Wales were followed by Tenuantius, now Duke of Cornwall, bringing up his Cornishmen, and by Androgeus with the men of Trinovantum.

Nennius, who led the men of Kent, was adorned with special splendour for this occasion; his throat and arms were protected by gilded armour, and his fiery horses were gay with wrought-gold peytrels and red-enamelled cheek-pieces. Then King Caswallon himself drove up, even more resplendent; and as his charioteer brought his horses to a sudden standstill, he sprang to earth and, ascending a rising ground, addressed his troops in an impassioned harangue, "full of sound and fury."

"The blood of the Romans," he declared, "will be more grateful to me than a well-spring of clear water to a man parched with thirst after a three-days' drought."

He was answered by a tumult of applause, and breathing hatred and defiance the troops set out on their march to Dover, taking the road that King Belin had made and which the Romans afterwards called Watling Street. But ere they reached the coast they were met by Belin with the disastrous news that, in spite of all his efforts, the Romans had already landed and were encamped on the shore between Walmer and Deal.

Caesar himself has told us all about that memorable August afternoon when he landed for the first time on the shores of Britain: how the Britons on the look-out raced along the beach to oppose his landing, and how they fled before the volleys of stones from the catapults in his war-galleys, though he praises their valour and the reckless way in which they drove their chariots into the waves. But the British chronicler passes over all this in silence!

Caswallon called a council, and his chiefs all advised him to attack the Roman camp without delay, so as to prevent the invaders marching any further inland.

There had been a storm during the night, and the Romans were busily engaged in mending their shipping when the Britons fell upon them unawares. A fierce hand-to-hand fight ensued, "spear and sword against spear and sword, and the ground was flooded with gore." Nennius was conscious of a thrill of strange joy on beholding the dark Roman faces for the first time. Weapons of unknown make and temper were flashing round him; sonorous, unmeaning words of command boomed in his ears. He pressed blindly

forward through the stabbing, yelling, writhing throng towards the place where the general was standing, impelled by the single thought: "Oh, if I could but strike *one* blow at so great a man!"

Caesar was stationed on a mound, surrounded by his bodyguard. He was at that time not more than forty-five years of age, but the ceaseless strain of his strenuous life had furrowed his face and withered the pale complexion of his youth, though it could not destroy the beauty of his firm-set mouth and clear-cut features. In the distance he still looked young; for his tall, spare figure was light and active and his scanty hair was hidden by his helmet. He stood calm and unmoved amid the hideous carnage, directing his men with curt words of encouragement. In his hand he held his favourite sword known as Yellow Death; it was said of this mighty brand that the man was never born who, if smitten by it however lightly, did not soon die.

Suddenly his bodyguard gave way, and Nennius, struggling forward, found himself face to face with the foremost man of all the world. In that supreme moment the Briton paused awe-struck; never before had he beheld a human being so noble. Their glances met and Nennius quailed before Caesar's steel-grey eyes. It seemed to him that in their piercing light there looked forth a god; or was it the spirit of great Rome herself, stern, dominant, relentless, that confronted him? In those eyes he read the doom of Britain that all his puny efforts were powerless to avert.

All this passed in a few seconds ; the shouts of the Kentish men pressing behind him recalled him to his senses. He raised his arm and struck with all his might. Caesar uttered no word or sound as he covered himself with his shield, then thrust at his assailant with the famous Yellow Death. The stroke grazed the prince's head protected only by its thick hair, and cut down the man at his side. Caesar struck again, and Nennius caught the blow upon his shield ; it was dealt with such force that the blade pierced the metal and stuck half-way through. The Roman tried to wrench it free again, but in the on-coming rush he let go the hilt, and Nennius was carried away on the tide of battle with the sword still fast in his shield.

When the wave was spent he found himself near his chariot, and taking refuge there for a moment, he tugged with might and main till he succeeded in pulling out the steel. He hurled his own bronze thing contemptuously away and flung himself once more into the fight. Blood from the wound in his head was dripping down his face, but he never felt it, though it almost blinded him as, possessed with an exultant fury, he laid about him and slew and slew till the red haze clouded his sight completely. He stumbled forward but felt himself caught by the friendly arm of Androgeus ; then knew no more.

When he came to himself he was lying in a litter carried by some of his own men. He was too weak to speak or move, but he heard the tramp of troops on the march and gathered from the voices round him

that the battle was over; the Romans had sailed back to Gaul and the Britons were returning in triumph to *Caer Lud*.

Caswallon conveyed his beloved brother to his own house where he lingered for fifteen days. Though the wound in his head was not a deep one it would not heal, for had it not been dealt by Caesar's sword? Outside, in the city, all was shouting and merry-making; for, though the people of *Caer Lud* mourned for their brave prince, they could not help rejoicing over what they called their victory. Thousands upon thousands of sheep and oxen were slaughtered: sacrifices to the gods smoked on all the altars, followed by cock-fighting and chariot racing. At dusk bonfires were set blazing, and feasting went on all night long; the minstrels sang songs to their harps, telling how Caesar had turned his craven back to the Britons and had betaken himself to his ships, glad enough to have the sea for his camp of refuge.

But Caswallon had but little delight in these festive scenes; his heart was wrung with grief, for it seemed certain that his brother must die. He often stole away from the noisy banqueting-hall to sit by the prince's bedside and soothe his parting hours. Nennius lay with Caesar's sword always within reach and sight, so that his conscious moments might be gladdened by this proud trophy. It was very broad and very long with a blade of finest tempered steel; on the hilt the name was carved, and the dying warrior loved to trace with feeble fingers the letters "*Crocea Mors*," that is, *Saffron* or *Yellow Death*.

"Nay, my brother," he said, seeing the tears running down the King's cheeks, "we must all die soon or late, and I grudge not my life since I have gained the imperishable glory of having captured such a brand. I have no other desire save that it may be buried with me in my coffin."

He died shortly afterwards, and the Britons with long and loud lamentations buried their hero with kingly honours by the north gate of the city he loved so well. "*Crocea Mors*" was laid beside him, and Caswallon caused a marble stone to be set up over his brother's grave. This monument was famous as a landmark for centuries and was known by the Saxons as Ninny's Tomb.

In the Ancient British Section of the British Museum five round bronze shields are to be seen, elaborately wrought with concentric rings and bosses. One of them was found in the bed of the Thames and has a great jagged hole near the centre, evidently caused by a spear or sword thrust. Who knows what hand sped that fierce blow? It may have been that of imperious Caesar himself. To the eyes of the dreamer these shields conjure up visions of fights fought long ago, but to the more practical they afford a striking proof of the high degree of excellence attained by the Britons in this branch of metal work.

VIII.

SAINT URSULA AND THE ELEVEN THOUSAND VIRGINS.

“ Those far renowned brides of ancient song
Peopled the hollow dark, like evening stars ;
And I heard sounds of insult, shame and wrong,
And trumpets blown for wars ”

TENNYSON . *Dream of Fair Women*

A.D. URSULA of the sunny golden locks was the
383. daughter of Dionotus, a prince of Cornwall,
and the niece of Caradoc, the reigning duke. Belong-
ing to the ancient royal line of Britain, she was
educated in all the proud traditions of her race and
in all the culture and refinement that the Roman
civilization afforded. Britons of the nobler classes
were by this time very like Roman ladies and gentle-
men in manner and dress ; they adopted Roman
names and learnt to speak Latin ; and Ursula, except
for her fair complexion, resembled a young Roman
lady.

Her father, Dionotus, held office under the Roman
rulers, and was much occupied with affairs of State.
Though a fond parent he was a stern man, and the
Roman government, itself very indifferent to human
suffering, did nothing to soften the harshness of his

nature. Yet he had a high-minded love of country and was grieved at the changes he saw going on around him. The great Roman empire was slowly crumbling to pieces and he trembled for the fate of Britain, already threatened by Picts in the North and by barbarous Ambrones (Saxons) from overseas. Instead of one Roman emperor, as formerly, there were now three or four; and Maximus, who ruled over the western empire of Gaul and Britain, was seldom in the island, although he had married a British princess named Oriene. He chiefly spent his time in warring against the rival emperor, Gratian, and in quelling the rebellions of his unruly subjects in Gaul. He was hard pressed for troops and repeatedly sent over for drafts of men; he emptied the garrison towns, and Britain, thus drained of all her fighting manhood, was in a perilous condition.

Ursula was still a little girl when her kinsman, Conan Meriadoc, also a prince of the royal house, departed for Gaul to join the Emperor Maximus, taking with him ten thousand raw recruits and thirty thousand trained British soldiers. He came one day to take leave of her father and mother, and Ursula stood by, shyly admiring his burnished helmet with its horse-hair crest. Her slender grace already gave promise of a noble beauty, and her abundant fair hair floated round her proud young head like a cloud of glory. Conan gazed at his little cousin with the respectful homage due to a grown-up princess.

"Here is one who will be fairer than many an

emperor's bride," he said somewhat bitterly, thinking of his other cousin. Oriene, who had been given in marriage to Maximus instead of to himself. "I am but a rough soldier who should by right be king of all Britain; yet—who knows?—I may find another kingdom, and if so, I shall know where to choose my queen "

Dionotus and Daria, his wife, smiled approvingly, for they were fond of their young kinsman though they had opposed him in his ambitious schemes.

So Conan departed and Ursula thought no more of his words, being indeed too childish to understand them. Her mind was occupied with her studies which were shared by a chosen band of young companions. She learnt to play on many instruments of music, and her Greek tutors taught her philosophy, astrology, the Greek and Latin languages and all the liberal arts. She was also instructed in the doctrines of the Christian faith.

The new religion was by this time gaining a great hold on the hearts of the people. The ancient temples had all been converted into churches, and the virgin choirs were now choirs of holy nuns who lived apart from the rest of the world. They spent their time not only in singing but in tending the sick and in making garments for the poor. Foremost in such good works was Pinnosa, a sister of Conan, and Cordula, a maiden so pious that she could heal the sick by her prayers alone. All over the country the daughters of noble houses, Briton and Roman alike, were following their example; and Ursula, as

she grew up, resolved to dedicate her life also to the service of Christ.

When the princess was about fifteen years old her mother died, and shortly afterwards Duke Caradoc died also, so Dionotus, his brother, became Duke of Cornwall. He was now the richest and most powerful noble in the island, and the Emperor Maximus, who was still away at the wars, appointed him governor of Britain in his absence.

Though Ursula had thus become the first lady in the land, she did not alter her resolution to devote her life to the Church. All her gifts, her beauty, her father's great position were only prized because of the greater scope they afforded for good works. The sweet humility taught by the Christian faith overcame her natural pride of race and made her beloved by high and low. To the daughters of the nobles she was the pattern of all that was beautiful and accomplished; and among the poor her name was blest as that of a ministering angel.

It was by this sympathy with the sufferings of others, this new spirit of gentleness and unselfishness, that the Christian religion dethroned the older gods in the hearts of the people, though the statues of their rural deities might still be seen mouldering by the wayside, "with stiff, deformed features"; to quote the historian Gildas.

But to return to Conan. The Emperor Maximus by means of frightful severities had put down the rebellion in Gaul; he ravaged and burnt, and, in the well-known Roman way, "made a desert and called

it peace." Having devastated the land of Armorica in the west, slaying even the women and children, he bestowed this province upon Conan as a reward for his services. Conan bowed his head in token of fealty and thus became the Duke or under-king of Armorica ; but because he loved the memory of his native-land so well, he called his new dominion Brittany, or Lesser Britain. He divided the land among his followers, who, after a while, begged their duke to send for British wives for them.

So Conan wrote to his kinsman Dionotus saying : " Send over as many peasant girls as you can muster, who can spin and weave and bake, as wives for my men , for the Gaulish women are few in number, and, moreover, I desire my kingdom to be wholly British."

Duke Dionotus was glad enough to help the new settlement, hoping it would in time become another Britain beyond the sea, the friend and ally of his own Britain when the strong arm of Rome should be withdrawn. But the daughters of the soil were reluctant to face the dangers of the sea and all the hardship and uncertainty of a life in a strange land, so that very few presented themselves in answer to his summons. Then the Duke, terrible in his wrath, issued a second proclamation, commanding his officers to hang every damsel who should refuse to obey. Thus threatened they dared not refuse, and shipload after shipload, sixty thousand in all, sailed from the Thames to the shores of Brittany.

The new colony thrived ; the fields were tilled, the cities rebuilt, the borders defended from the sur-

rounding nations. Seeing order and peace established Conan wrote again to his kinsman Dionotus, saying : " Send over, I pray you, as many ladies of noble and gentle birth as can be spared by their families, as wives for my officers and chief men who disdain to marry peasant women. And for myself, since I have obtained, as I hoped, another kingdom, I ask for the hand of my cousin Ursula whom I desire above all others as my queen "

On receiving this letter Duke Dionotus looked grave and thoughtful. He had scolded and threatened other fathers, but when it came to parting with his own child the land of exile assumed a far less pleasing aspect. Nevertheless, the welfare of his country was so dear to him that he resolved to sacrifice even his own beloved daughter in this great cause. So he sent for the princess. As she entered his presence attired in a rich crimson robe, her fair hair confined by a fillet of gems, he looked at her regal beauty with new eyes, thinking with pardonable pride that he could bestow on Conan a mate fit for the haughtiest king, fairer far than Oriene who had shared the imperial purple.

" Dost remember thy cousin Conan, child ? " he asked, giving her the letter. " He would have thee for his queen, even as he foretold."

Ursula read the letter carefully through to the end, then returned it, saying in a firm, yet gentle voice :

" I have no wish to be a queen, far less to be married ; for Christ himself is my bridegroom, and I hope hereafter to obtain a crown of glory."

Dionotus gazed at the young enthusiast in some perplexity : such fervour was beyond his comprehension. He had hitherto given but little thought to religious matters and had laughed at the old gods of Olympus as so many fairy-tales. The various cults that had succeeded—that of Mithras, the sun-god, of Cybele, the Great Mother, of the Egyptian Isis—had seemed to him mere fashionable crazes. As for the worship of the Galilaean, he upheld it since it now found favour with the Roman rulers ; but he had never stopped to consider its true meaning or its powerful influence upon the lives and actions of believers. He felt confronted by some unknown power. At last he said :

“ Child, we belong not to ourselves. Though you may prefer a crown of glory, have you any right to refuse an earthly kingdom if it is for your country’s good that you should accept it ? Have you no love for your native-land ? Is it nothing to you that the realm of Britain should perish utterly ? Rome is too enfeebled to defend us much longer ; the Picts harass us from the North, the barbarians rise up from the sea, and how can your barren Christian faith keep them at bay ? ”

His daughter looked at him, startled and dismayed.

“ But what matters it to you ? ” he went on bitterly, misinterpreting her silence. “ Let these heathen come and harry our island from shore to shore, we shall be dead and gone ! Let them burn the cities and all the churches within them and sell the Christians for slaves ! Let them set up their

bloodthirsty gods in place of your cold Galilaean, and stamp his gospel out of the land ! ”

The princess was much moved by these words. She had been so absorbed by her own dreams and in the service of her Divine Master that she had paid but little heed to affairs of State. A new light broke over her mind and was reflected in her face. Still she was silent.

“ But beyond the sea,” the Duke went on, seeing her waver, “ our kinsfolk are building up another Britain to befriend us in our hour of need, and shall the noblest of our women refuse to help forward this great work ? ”

Deeply pondering over these words Ursula turned for counsel to her two friends, Pinnosa and Cordula.

“ I see in this the will of Heaven,” said the sister of Conan. “ By giving your life to this new country you continue the work of Christ, since you will establish his Church more firmly among those half-barbarous people who are now relapsing into heathenish practices for want of better teaching. Nor shall you go alone. Consider how many of our sisters would follow, did you but lead the way.”

“ And thou ? ” asked Ursula wistfully.

“ We will go with thee,” answered both Pinnosa and Cordula resolutely. The princess embraced them fondly, smiling through her tears. It was a hard trial to leave her home and her happy life in Britain, but after seeking guidance in prayer she hesitated no longer ; it seemed revealed to her in

a vision that by obeying her father's behests she could best serve her Divine Master.

Well pleased at her decision Duke Dionotus issued a third proclamation that was published throughout the length and breadth of the land. It was an appeal from Ursula herself, calling upon the daughters of the nobles to leave the ease and security of their homes and follow her into Brittany; to brave the terrors of the sea for the love of Christ and their country. Her appeal fired the hearts of thousands of high-born ladies and thousands of lower degree; they who would have scorned to obey because of Duke Dionotus' cruel threats, were now only too eager to follow where their beloved princess led, however perilous the adventure; more even than were needed. It is true that many were not sorry to leave their dull cloistered lives to seek new homes and ties; but to others it was a real sacrifice to forsake parents and friends for unknown bridegrooms in a distant land; and their parents, though full of sorrow at losing their children, could not refuse their consent when their stern duke was ready to sacrifice his own dear young daughter to the great cause.

Dionotus sent orders to all the harbours along the coasts, directing the largest and most sea-worthy ships to be brought round with their crews and anchored in the Thames under the Tower of Julius Caesar (a fortress the Romans had built on the site of King Belin's tower). On the appointed day the destined brides assembled in London, and thirty-nine sailing galleys, well-built, well-found and

manned by skilful seamen, were drawn up along the quays.

A vast concourse of people assembled to watch the brides embark ; they pressed round the princess Ursula to praise and bless her as her father led her on board, grieving to lose their dearest lady, yet wishing God speed her on her voyage and grant her happiness in the new life before her.

Sad scenes of weeping and leave-taking followed as fathers and mothers embraced their children for the last time ; but the tide was flowing and a fair wind blowing, so Dionotus, anxious to cut short these painful farewells, gave the signal for departure. " A cry of measureless sorrow " went up to Heaven as the fleet, bearing its precious cargo, dropped down the river.

All went well till they reached the high sea, when, as the shipmen were tacking about to turn into the Channel, a contrary wind sprang up in their teeth, scattering the galleys and driving them with great violence up the North Sea. The maidens shrieked with terror as the black clouds hid the sky and the long grey waves, each like a wall of water, came rolling up and threatening every moment to overwhelm them.

The storm raged all night ; but towards morning it subsided, and at daybreak it was seen that twelve of the fleet were missing ; they had either foundered or had been driven far over the ocean. Of the remaining twenty-seven many were badly damaged, and many of the damsels were already dead or dying

from the terror and buffetings of that awful night. They found themselves off the coast of Holland, and as the wind had changed the steersmen set their course again for Gaul.

Now in one of the islands near, two fierce sea-kings had taken up their abode. They were Guanis the Hun and Melga the Pict, and though in the pay of the Emperor Gratian, they were no better than common pirates and slave-dealers. For seven years they had scoured the seas and raided the coasts of Northern Europe; outlaws from Norway and Denmark, those nations of born sea-rovers, resorted to them in great numbers and they had got together a band of men unmatched for courage and seamanship, but desperate and violent. No deed was too daring or too wicked for them to undertake; no storm wild enough to daunt them.

That morning, Guanis, on the look-out as usual, perceived five ships drifting by, then four, and so on till he had counted twenty-seven in all. Seeing such tall, well-built craft in distress he called to his crews:

“Man the ships! That must surely be the fleet of some rich king void of counsel, who would fare with his knights to some other land. Let us after them and despoil them!”

So they ran down to the strand, where their brigantines, fifteen in number, were always in readiness, hoisted sail and gave chase, rejoicing in the prospect of a brisk encounter.

When the sailing-master of Ursula's vessel, who was the captain of the fleet, sighted the fifteen sail

he was filled with despair, for his shipmen were too few in number to offer any resistance. All they could do to save their helpless passengers was to flee as best they could, towing the battered ships after them, and to make for the nearest land. The rowers rowed with all their might but the swift barks of the enemy were now in close pursuit, and as they neared an island in the mouth of the Rhine, were fast gaining upon them. The rowers, straining every muscle, made one last desperate effort to reach the shore, but alas, ere they could do so the pirates were upon them !

Guanis and his men sprang on board the princess' ship, and great was their surprise to see the deck crowded with young girls, some on their knees, others lying prostrate or clinging to the rigging. At the sight of their fair complexions and woebegone beauty the miscreants shouted with horrid glee, for their prices in the slave-markets of the South would be worth many pounds of gold. In the meantime Melga and the other pirates were boarding ship after ship. They slew all the shipmen without mercy, flung the bodies of those maidens who, more fortunate, were already dead, into the sea, and dragged their captives to land, a desolate island where there was none to aid.

Ursula was frozen with grief and horror. The fury of the waves seemed kind in comparison with the savagery of these heathen ; yet her thoughts were not for herself but for her unhappy sisters whom she had led to this awful fate. She would

gladly have given her life for theirs, but she was powerless to save, and while they were weeping and struggling she stood proud and tearless, holding her crucifix clasped against her breast.

Guanis, the chief, brutal and ferocious though he was, was touched for a moment by some gentler feeling.

"This lady by her royal mien is no doubt a king's daughter," he thought. "Here is the wife for me, and we will rule together in my island and, it may be, found a kingdom." He advanced to take her hand but she recoiled with a gesture of aversion.

"I have dedicated my soul to God," she said, "and I scorn to save my life by mating with a heathen."

The pirate-king looked at her in amazement, while her fearless bearing gave courage to her companions.

"Do you know you are in my power?" he asked grimly.

"I know that my body is in your power," answered the princess with a firm voice, "but my soul is free, and no fear of shame or torments shall make me waver."

Then turning to her companions she exhorted them to fear nothing even amid these ravening wolves, for the greater their sufferings, the brighter would be their crown of martyrdom as the unsullied brides of Christ. As she spoke her face became irradiated with an unearthly beauty, her tall form seemed dilated by the pure and lofty soul within that cowed even the savage Hun, till the name

of Christ fell upon his ear. That sacred name was hateful to the fanatic pagan. He abhorred the new religion and had helped to torture many a Christian martyr. The thought that it was this strange faith that emboldened a defenceless maid to spurn even himself with scorn and loathing, goaded him to uncontrollable fury. He rushed at her with his drawn sword; and Ursula, spreading her arms wide, received the blow full in her heart. The sight of her blood increased his tigerish hate.

“ Kill all the Christians, kill all the proud jades ! ” he shouted to his men. Following his example they fell upon their innocent victims and butchered them without mercy.

The sun went down that evening on a piteous and ghastly scene, and of all that company of noble maidens only one survived to tell the tale. This was Cordula, who had managed to outrun her pursuers, and when the last pirate ship had sailed away she stole forth from her hiding-place. She gazed, numb with excess of anguish, at the bodies of the youthful martyrs that lay strewn along the beach, some singly and some in heaps, and would fain have died with them. She was found by some boatmen, who conveyed her up the river to Cologne, where there was a growing Christian community, many being of British birth. Accustomed though they were to deeds of ruthless violence, her story roused a thrill of horror. Alas, nothing could be done to avenge those slaughtered saints, for Guanis and Melga were

protected by their commissions from the Emperor Gratian ; but at least Christian burial could be given to the hapless remains. So in course of time a ship was fitted out, and the bones of Ursula and of eleven thousand British maidens that were found bleaching on the sand were brought to Cologne and reverently buried.

A church was afterwards built on this spot and dedicated to Saint Ursula, which during the Middle Ages became a place of pilgrimage, and many miracles were wrought at her shrine.

But the chroniclers tell us nothing more about Duke Dionotus, nor of the grief of those other parents when they heard of the cruel fate that had befallen their children, thus sacrificed in vain. Nor do we know anything more about Conan. Though he lost his beautiful bride he must afterwards have married some Roman or British lady, for he was an ancestor of the renowned King Arthur.

IX.

THE RED AND THE WHITE DRAGON.

“Merlin, well versed in many a hidden spell,
His country’s omen did long since foretell
Grac’d in his time by sundry kings he was,
And all that he predicted came to pass ”

THOMAS HEYWOOD

A.D. KING VORTIGERN had fled away, terrified
480? and bewildered after the massacre of St.
Ambrius, into the wild mountains of Wales, pursued
by the curses of his people for having invited the
Saxons into the land.

He was encamped at the foot of Mount Eryri
(Snowdon) with all his baggage and treasure, accom-
panied by his few remaining followers and by his
Saxon queen, the flaxen-haired, false-hearted Rowena.
He was bewitched by the blond beauty of this heathen
woman and still loved her, though he knew her to
be the tool of her father Hengist. She it was who
had artfully persuaded him to repair with five
hundred British princes, all unarmed, to the peace
conference where they had fallen into a trap whence
very few escaped alive. Though Vortigern had
saved his own life by yielding up many cities, he
lived in continual fear of some new treachery.

And he was tormented by still another fear, even greater : the return of the sons of Constantine, the rightful kings of Britain. Twenty years before he had caused King Constantine and his eldest son to be foully murdered, and the queen, a noble Roman lady, had fled into Brittany with the two infant princes, Aurelius and Uther. They were brought up in the court of their uncle, Duke Aldroen (the fourth from Conan), and as time went by reports of the manly beauty and prowess of the princes kept reaching Britain ; how no one was their equal in single combat, either on horseback or on foot, no one more skilled in military affairs.

Vortigern grew sick at heart. Few of his subjects bore him any goodwill, for he was not only a usurper but had proved himself a tyrant ; his knights looked at him askance ; he knew that they were all longing to welcome back these princes of the ancient royal line, and were plotting for their return.

"Surely never was chief so sore beset as I," he thought, "threatened as I am by foes on all sides—Picts, Saxons and Britons !"

At last the dreaded news reached him in his mountain retreat that the royal brothers were building a fleet ; he felt the toils closing round him, and in desperation he turned to the wizards for help, spurning the advice of his Christian clergy.

A remnant of the ancient Druids still survived in Wales, and though they had lost all power as priests, they were considered very skilful as magicians and soothsayers. In those days everyone, whether

Christian or heathen, believed in magic ; there were two sorts, the Black and the White ; the one supposed to be inspired by evil spirits and the other by good. It was Black Magic, or Nigromancy, that the Druids practised ; they were said to have dealings with the demons and cruel gods that the true Faith had driven into the remote islands of the west, and many dark and terrible deeds were perpetrated at their mysterious rites.

In answer to the King's summons the Arch-druid, Joram, and seven of his disciples resorted to the camp with their magic books and wands ; but all they could do for the unhappy chief in his distress was to advise him to build a strong tower on the mountain side and to shut himself up there with all his treasure. Vortigern at once commanded the carpenters and masons of the surrounding districts to be sent for, a site was chosen, the stones collected, and the men set to work to dig and lay the foundations.

And now another vexation awaited the distracted monarch ; the master mason came to him one morning with a face of dismay ; it was impossible, he said, to go on with the building, for all stones that his men laid during the day sank into the earth during the night and were swallowed up, as it were by some abyss. Vortigern sent for his Druids, and in a great rage demanded the reason of this strange occurrence. But they were as perplexed as their master ! Yet it would never do to betray their ignorance, so they shook their heads very wisely and retired to a neighbouring wood to practise their incantations. All

night long they could be heard at their dreadful work, and on the morning of the third day they returned with Joram at their head, who approached the King with solemn looks, saying :

“ It has been revealed to us that the foundations of your tower can never stand until the lime for the mortar has been slaked with the blood of a boy that had never a father.”

Vortigern was surprised, yet expressed no horror at the words, for dreadful practices such as this were only too common in the Middle Ages ; his only anxiety was how to find the right sort of boy. He chose out twelve of his knights and bade them go by twos and twos to scour the country round in search of a suitable victim. In the meantime the sooth-sayers retired, greatly relieved at having deceived the King so easily.

The knights dispersed in all directions, but nowhere could they find or hear of a boy that had never a father. At last it chanced that four of their number met together at the gates of the city of Caermarthen, and, being weary with much wandering, they all sat down to rest in the cool of the evening. A group of lads were playing ball outside the gate, and the men grew interested in watching the game. Their attention was speedily attracted by one boy with wild elfin locks and dark, lustrous eyes, who excelled all his playfellows in skill and who won all the games, till at last the youngsters began to quarrel about it, and one of the bigger boys, growing angry, struck the winner in the face, crying :

"Dost think thou art a match for me? Keep thy distance prithee. Here am I with royal blood in my veins, but who art thou? No one knows who thou art, for never a father hadst thou!"

The knights sprang up on hearing these words and seized the dark-haired child

"What do you mean?" they asked his companions. "Is he not an ordinary mortal boy?" But the others, taking fright, ran away without answering. Some of the townspeople, however, who had also been looking on, informed the knights that his name was Ambrose, and that he had been baptized a Christian; some gave it as their opinion that he was a fairy's son, but all were agreed that he was a strange uncanny imp and that his birth was wrapt up in mystery.

The boy himself offered no resistance when the men hurried off with him to the reeve of the city and claimed him in the name of King Vortigern. The reeve, though at first unwilling, handed the boy over to their custody, not daring to refuse for fear of the tyrant's displeasure, yet knowing that he was delivering him over to a cruel death.

The next morning they set out on their return journey, taking the young Ambrose with them, who showed no signs of fear. On the road he talked with a wisdom so much beyond his years that his captors were filled with compassion.

"It were a pity," they said to each other, "to slay this noble child. Is the King's tower worth such a sacrifice? Would not some more ordinary blood cement his squared stones?"

On arriving at Mount Eryri the boy entered the King's presence with a proud, calm bearing. Vortigern gazed with admiration at the slender figure standing before him, very different from the shrinking victim he had expected. The boy was only in his early teens, but his face had an austere beauty and an intellectual power, strange in one so young. Fixing his dark, piercing eyes upon the King he asked in a tone of almost stern reproof :

"Why have I been called into your presence ? "

Hardened though he was and used to bloodshed, Vortigern quailed before that glance.

"My wizards have bidden me slay you and sprinkle the mortar with your blood," he faltered, "that the foundations of my tower may stand firm."

"Bid your wizards come before you, my lord King, that I may convict them of a lie."

"If you can do that I will spare your life," said the tyrant eyeing him keenly.

The Druids who had been consulting as to the manner of putting their victim to death, entered the tent at their master's summons, their cruel eyes appraising the boy as if he had been a kid or a lamb brought for the sacrifice.

"Be of good comfort," said Vortigern, interpreting their looks, "I will be mindful of my promise."

Ambrose stood confronting the Arch-druid. "Tell me now, Joram," he said in a voice of command, "tell me what lies under the foundations of the King's tower, for something there is that causes them

to sink. You who have advised him to cement the stones with my blood should know the cause."

But the hoary mage made no reply. His eyes met those of the stripling and fell abashed.

"My lord King," resumed the boy, "call your workmen and bid them dig the dyke seven feet deeper than it is now, and they shall find a stone, wondrous broad and long."

Vortigern rose and with all his company repaired to the site of the tower. He commanded the masons to dig seven feet deeper, and when they had done so, the men declared they could go no further as they had come upon a slab of stone. The bystanders looked at each other in astonishment, but the stern young stranger turned to the Druids saying:

"Tell me now, impostors, what is there that lies beneath the stone?" But the wizards were dumb-founded, for they recognized a power greater than their own.

"Royal sir," went on the boy, "your wizards are so ignorant that they do not know what lies beneath the stone. It is a moat, dark and deep; bid your masons lift the slab and you shall see what it is that prevents your tower from standing."

With great efforts the stone was hauled away and a pool of clear, black water disclosed to view.

"Tell me now, lying flatterers," he said, again addressing the Druids, "what is there at the bottom of the moat that dwells there summer and winter?"

The wretched men tried to stammer some reply,

but their tongues failed them. The dark, accusing eyes surveyed them scornfully as their owner continued -

"My lord the King, two strong dragons, red and white, lie asleep at the bottom of the moat, one on the north side and the other on the south. At midnight they awake and begin to fight, and as they fight the earth sinks, it trembles and the walls fall in. Command the water to be drained off by conduits and make proof of my words."

This would be a costly business, requiring much time and labour; yet Vortigern, awestruck, commanded the pool to be drained without delay. He looked round vindictively for the wizards, but they had slunk away unperceived, terrified lest his wrath should overtake them.

One midnight after the pit was drained, King, knights and workmen armed with torches, gathered round the edge, watching eagerly for what should happen. Presently two enormous serpents issued forth, one of a light and the other of a dark colour. They began to fight furiously down the dyke, hissing and panting forth flames of fire as they coiled round each other. At first the White serpent had the advantage, then the Red; then the White again was victorious and drove the Red to the outlet of the pit; finally both disappeared. Vortigern stood gazing after them, lost in wonder.

"Interpret me the meaning of this spectacle!" he commanded. All eyes were turned to the boy, who during this time had remained somewhat aloof, and

seemed lost in a trance. The King's words awoke him, but instead of replying he burst into tears.

"Alas for my unhappy country!" he said at last. "The Red Dragon is the race of Britain, and the White betokens the Saxons that you have invited into the land. Woe to the Red Dragon, for his extermination draweth nigh."

The King scowled and remained for some time lost in bitter thoughts, but rousing himself, he inquired:

"Who are you, wondrous child?"

"My name is Ambrose Merlin," was the reply.

"What is your origin?"

"A Roman consul was my father," answered the youth proudly. Nevertheless a report went abroad that he was a demon's son, for wisdom such as his could surely belong to no mortal man. Others, however, believed that he was possessed by a holy spirit.

Vortigern would not allow Ambrose to return to Caermarthen but rewarded him with a tract of land known as Dinas Emrys, and kept him always by his side, hoping by his help to regain the cities he had yielded up to Hengist. The boy often fell into trances and would utter wild, confused prophecies which the King caused to be carefully written down in a book. This book was considered so precious by the Welsh that it was stored with the relics of the saints and the Book of the Eagle, that marvellous bird that spoke on the walls of Shaftesbury.

The building of the tower went on without any

further accident, but Vortigern grew more gloomy and despondent. He would sit silent and solitary for hours in a "summer parlour" that he had built, thinking over the past with remorse and despairing of the future. At such times none dared approach him except Ambrose Merlin; not even Rowena, whose beauty had lost all power to beguile him. Traitor though he knew him to be and stained with crime, the boy could not help feeling some pity for his unhappy master, and often tried to dispel his sadness by singing songs to his harp, or by a game of chess. By the aid of magic arts, in which he was an adept, he would devise moving pictures, such as gay hunting scenes with hawks and hounds, horsemen fighting in single combat, lions, eagles, and lovely ladies in glistening attire, that faded away into thin air with the changing of the light.

But though these hollow shows diverted his thoughts for a while, Vortigern soon relapsed into his brooding melancholy. He was haunted by the idea of a terrible doom awaiting him, and one day he besought the young seer to reveal to him the end of his life. Merlin tried to evade the question, but as the King redoubled his entreaties, he replied in a warning tone :

"I will tell you, but you will rue it."

"Let me know the worst," answered the other doggedly.

The youth sat silent for a space with a rapt look in his eyes as though gazing at some inward vision; then flinging back his long black hair and "breathing in the breath of prophecy," he cried: "Flee from

the wrath of the sons of Constantine, if flee thou canst. Even now they are leaving the coasts of Brittany and spreading their sails for Britain. They come to subdue the accursed Saxons, but first they will surround thee in thy castle and burn it to the ground. To thine own destruction didst thou betray their father and invite the Saxons into the land. Two deaths await thee, yet it is not clear to me which of the twain thou mayst first escape. Tomorrow Aurelius and Uther will be in the harbour of Totnes with seven hundred ships, and whithersoever thou fleest they will pursue thee. Hengist shall be slain and Aurelius crowned king."

When the morrow dawned the Breton fleet was sighted off Totnes, and shortly afterwards Aurelius and Uther landed with ten thousand men.

The news of their coming spread like wild-fire over the land; the Britons flocked in their thousands to welcome the princes and to rally round their standard. But Vortigern was panic-stricken, for his strong tower in which he had hoped to save himself, was not half completed. Yet he had another fortress, the castle of Gonoreu, on the banks of the Wye, and in hot haste he set about packing his baggage-waggons and preparing for flight. He begged Merlin to accompany him, but the youth shook his head.

"I will remain in the manor that you have given me," he said, for he knew that the tyrant's doom was sealed and that he was powerless to avert it.

The fugitives reached Gonoreu in safety, but scarcely had Vortigern fortified the castle and made

ready to stand a siege than the avengers were upon him. Aurelius, though raging to fall upon Hengist and his Saxons, determined that he would first call his father's murderer to a reckoning, "that most impious of men, worthy to die in torments unspeakable."

The siege was a short one. Aurelius surrounded the castle with his troops, but because he had not patience to batter down the walls he heaped up fuel round them and burnt them to the ground.

Some say that both Vortigern and Rowena perished in the flames, but others declare that the false queen fled back to her own people and that Vortigern also escaped. He wandered about the country, hiding in caves and woods, and died many years later in beggary.

X.

THE GIANTS' DANCE.

"Thou noblest monument of Albion's isle !
Whither by Merlin's art from Scythia's shore
To Amber's fatal field Pendragon bore,
Huge frame, of giant hands the mighty pile,
To entomb his Britons, slain by Hengist's guile "

JOSEPH WARTON.

A.D. KING AURELIUS stood on the bleak, wind-
490? swept plain of St. Ambrius and gazed upon
the grass-grown mounds where the murdered chiefs
lay buried. Tears flowed down the cheeks of the
generous young prince as he thought of that dis-
astrous day when four hundred and sixty unarmed
Britons had fallen by treacherous Saxon knives.

His eyes ranged over the wide expanse that suc-
ceeding springs had clothed with green, so that the
graves were hardly to be distinguished from the rolling
weald, and he turned inquiringly to the two guides
who had led him to this hallowed spot; the holy
Bishop Eldad, formerly abbot of the neighbouring
monastery, and Eldol, the valiant earl of Gloucester,
one of the few survivors. This stout chief claimed
descent from Corineus, and a worthy descendant he
was, for he had caught up a stake lying near and fought
his way through his assailants, killing seventy of

their number. When the Saxons had fled from the scene of slaughter leaving the corpses of their victims unburied, it was the Blessed Eldad and his monks who had conveyed the bleeding remains to this consecrated ground and interred them with Christian rites. He now pointed out to the King the last resting-place of this and that chieftain.

"We have amply avenged their deaths," said Eldol grimly, as he thought of the stricken field of Maesbeli where thousands of Saxons had fallen, and of the battle near Caer Conan (Knaresborough) where he had gripped Hengist by the nose-piece of his helmet and, dragging him out of the ranks, had slain him with his own hand. Hengist lay buried beneath a cairn of stones, and his sons, with a remnant of the Saxons, were driven beyond the Roman Wall.

"Yet if I had had my way," said the ruthless Earl, "I would have slain the murderers to the last man."

"Nay," answered the good Bishop gently. "Shall Christians deny mercy to them that seek it? Broad is the land of Britain and in many places void of inhabitants: let us suffer them at least to dwell in our desert places"

"Vengeance cannot bring these dead to life again," said the King sadly. "I would fain raise a monument to their memory, for it is not fitting that only green turf should cover so many noble warriors who died for their country."

They turned to seek their horses and attendants, and rode back to Winchester, which city Aurelius had made his capital, since it was there that he had

been anointed and crowned king. It took some time to restore order and to rebuild the churches that the Saxons had burnt down, but when this work was accomplished he turned to the other work so near his heart, that of erecting a memorial. He sent for the most skilful craftsmen in wood and stone that were to be found, and desired them to contrive some new sort of building that should stand for ever. But they all distrusted their powers too much to undertake such a task; they could build churches and castles after the designs taught them by their fathers but were not equal to inventing anything original.

Aurelius was feeling very downcast about the matter when the Archbishop of Caerleon-upon-Usk, hearing of his difficulty, came to him one day and said :

“ There is only one man in the kingdom who could execute such a memorial, and that is the young Ambrose Merlin, he that was soothsayer to King Vortigern. I counsel you to send for him; for there is no man of brighter genius, whether it be in foretelling events or in devising cunning artifices and engines. He is without doubt inspired by some spirit of God.”

But where was Merlin? No one had seen him since the death of Vortigern, though it was known that he had not accompanied the fugitives to Genoreu but had stayed behind at the manor of Dinas Emrys. Yet he was not to be found at Dinas Emrys! Many said he had been spirited away by his master, the great magician Blase, to some dim region of the

North, there to be instructed in arts unknown before, or known only to the ancients.

The King despatched messengers north, south, east and west ; and those that went towards the west journeyed through the country of the Gewissi in South Wales. One day, in passing near Clydach, they perceived a young man sitting on the margin of a fountain, gazing intently into the depths of its waters. He looked up at their approach and said :

“ I saw you coming from afar ; at noon yesterday I knew you would come,” fixing on them his dark, wonderful eyes, so dreamy yet so piercing that they seemed to read the inmost thoughts of their hearts. The knights who had dismounted, looked at each other in astonishment, feeling sure that this could be no other than the enchanter himself.

“ Hail, Merlin, wisest of men ! ” they cried. “ Our good king Aurelius has sent us to you, and beseeches you courteously to come to him at Winchester, where he will bestow upon you gold and land.”

“ I care not for gold or land,” answered the adept, “ nevertheless, I will come with you.” Yet he resumed his seat on the ledge of the fountain and remained quite still for a long time, taking no notice of the strangers. At last he said :

“ Unless I had wished it you could not have found me. I know Aurelius and I know Uther though I never saw them with these eyes ; and I know the son of Uther though he is yet unborn. He shall be mighty as a wild boar bristled with steel.”

Then he rose and prepared to accompany the

messengers, and one of their number hastened on ahead to announce his coming to the King.

Aurelius himself rode out to meet the welcome guest, with his brother Uther by his side, and when Merlin beheld these two gallant young warriors he loved them as he had never loved any man before. The brothers embraced the Enchanter and greeted him like a royal prince, such was their reverence for his knowledge and supernatural gifts. Amid the shouting of the people they led him into the castle where the noblest chamber had been prepared for him. Yet even so, they rather mistook the character of their guest, for when they were at leisure Aurelius begged him to foretell some future event as a proof of his skill. But the young sage answered sternly :

"Not so ; I do not prophesy for the amusement of princes, for were I to do so my power would fail me in the hour of need."

The King, abashed by this rebuke, turned to the subject of the memorial.

"If you wish to raise an everlasting monument," said the Enchanter, "send for the Giants' Dance that stands on Killaraus mountain in Ireland."

Aurelius was at first disappointed, then he burst out laughing.

"How can we bring pillars of such tremendous size over land and sea ?" he cried. "And why should we try ? Have we not enough stones in Britain for the job ?"

"Laugh not so lightly, my lord King," answered

Merlin. "These sarsens¹ were brought from Africa by giants of old time and are of such magic property and power that they will stand for ever."

Aurelius' mirthful mood changed at once to eager interest. He wished to rear a pile that should endure throughout the ages, proclaiming from generation to generation the martyrdom of the honoured dead. How could their memory be perpetuated better than by such a monument?

"Yet is it possible to ship stones of such bigness and transport them overseas to Britain?" he asked doubtfully.

"Should I have counselled you to send for them if it were not possible?" returned the other in quiet reproof.

After consulting with his nobles, Aurelius requested Merlin to go over to Ireland himself to fetch the Giants' Dance, with a body of fifteen thousand men commanded by Prince Uther, in case the King of Kildare should refuse to part with that enchanted circle.

When they arrived at Kildare and informed King Gilloman of their quest, he too, burst out laughing:

"What fools these Britons are!" he exclaimed. "No wonder the Saxons conquered them! Are the stones of Ireland any better than those of Britain?"

Nevertheless, as Aurelius had foreseen, though he did not prize his sarsens he did not intend to let the Britons have them.

"Never, by the head of St. Brandran and by the

¹ i.e. Saracen stones

foot of St. Bride," he swore, "never while life is in me, shall they carry off the smallest column of the Giants' Dance."

It was a vain boast; his wretched, ragged army, furnished with no other weapons than sticks and stones, were quickly routed by the trained British troops, who, having thus cleared the road, marched on to Killaraus.

As they drew near the mountain side and descried the grey rough-hewn masses looming in awful loneliness through the misty air, they were filled with dread at what seemed to them some upheaval of the ancient world; but on coming nearer they perceived that these were not primeval rocks flung up haphazard, but an ordered structure of definite plan. The granite and sandstone pillars were ranged in regular circles, outer and inner, enclosing two of horseshoe shape. Other stones or cromlechs, placed beamwise across the top of the uprights of the outer ring, gave them a fanciful resemblance to giants joining hands for a dance.

The Britons had brought hawsers and scaling ladders with them and, a certain number having been told off for the work, Merlin marshalled these men before him and addressed them as follows: "Now, my men, try what you can do to fetch me down these stones, then we shall know whether strength avails more than skill."

The masons applied themselves to the work with a right good will, but though they toiled and groaned and sweated, they could hardly dislodge the cromlechs

a single inch. Prince Uther directed their puny efforts and Merlin stood watching them, half smiling. At last when the men were so spent and weary with their labour that they were ready to give it up in despair, he called out in commanding tones :

“ Uther, stand back, assemble thy knights and let no man stir. Let us now see if skill can prevail where strength has failed.”

Uther drew off his men to some little distance away, about a stone's throw, and the Enchanter began his mystic work. The beholders were filled with amazement as he glided in and out of the charmed circles, uttering a low humming sound, while his lips moved as if he were telling his beads. Three times he threaded his way through the columns till he had reversed the spell that held them rooted in the earth, then lightly and deftly he took them down one by one. This done, he bade the men approach and lift the blocks ; they did so and to their surprise found they were as light as balls of feathers. It was an easy matter then to carry them to the coast and place them on board their ships ; and thus with a fair wind the Giants' Dance was conveyed in triumph to the plain of St Ambrius

The season of Pentecost was approaching, and, according to custom, Aurelius prepared to celebrate that festival by holding a court and wearing his crown in the presence of his people.

“ For this the King with pomp and pride
Held solemn court at Whitsuntide
And summoned prince and peer :

All who owed homage for their land
Or who craved knighthood at his hand
Or who had succour to demand,
To come from far and near "

But this year, instead of at Winchester, he decided to hold the court at St. Ambrius so that the festival might also be graced by the ceremony of erecting the Memorial.

It was the pleasant month of June, and ninthousand tents covered the plain, once so desolate but now transformed into a scene of bustle and festivity. Music, games and dances beguiled the intervals of feasting and business; the minstrels sang songs to their harps, telling of the victories of their great king, Aurelius, how the Red Dragon had overcome the White and had brought back the good old times once more.

During the first two days the King distributed honours and rewards, but on the third day the people were invited to repair to the burial-ground. Earthworks had been thrown up to protect the sacred enclosure and the columns were piled up in readiness. A hush fell on the multitude as the bishops and churchmen issued forth in solemn procession and consecrated the stones to their new office by pouring on holy oil. Then Merlin advanced and the crowd watched in breathless admiration how the Enchanter trod his mysterious mazes, muttering incantations the while. These ended, he ranged the great upright pillars of the trilithons to form circles and ovals, in the exact position in which they had stood on the hillside of Killaraus, yet in such a way as to dominate the

graveyard ; then he surmounted them by the lintels or "hanging stones," as easily as a child building bricks ; finally he set up the altar in the centre ; then, turning towards the King, declared his task accomplished.

The monument rose complete in its rude majesty against the clear blue sky, and a thunderous shout from many thousands of throats rolled through the air to greet this wonder of the world. King Aurelius was greatly moved, and addressing his brother, Uther, and others standing about him, he said :

"When I come to die let me also lie within this hallowed circle by the side of my kindred, and let bishops and book-learned men carry me to my burial."

All eyes were turned towards Merlin who stood rapt in one of his trances. At length he roused himself and cried :

"So long as the realm of Britain shall endure, so long this Giant Ring shall stand in perpetual memory of our murdered countrymen."

Alas ! Even in this the hated Saxons have prevailed, for they changed the name of the Giants' Dance to Stanhanges, or Stonehenge, and destroyed all records of its origin. It still stands on Salisbury Plain, and the bones of the Britons moulder deep below ; but the art of the enchanter has not availed to keep its magic circles unbroken or the names of the princes from oblivion.

XI.

UTHER PENDRAGON.

“ For first Aurelius lived and fought and died,
And after him King Uther fought and died.
But either failed to make the kingdom one
And after them King Arthur for a space

Drew all their petty pryncedoms under him,
Their king and head, and made a realm and reigned ”

TENNYSON · *Idylls of the King.*

A.D. GILLOMAN, King of Kildare, was so enraged
504? by the loss of his Giants' Dance that he
fitted out a fleet to fetch it back again, and with him
was Pascent, son of Vortigern, who was burning to
avenge his father. These two, with a rabble of Saxon
freebooters and wild Irish, set sail and steered
their course for Menevia (Milford Haven). On
landing they were rejoiced by the tidings that King
Aurelius had fallen ill at Winchester and could not
lead his armies in the field. He had, it is true, given
the command of his troops to his brother, Uther, who
was marching at full speed to meet them, but Pascent
was none the less full of revengeful glee. Knowing
this, one of the Saxon freebooters, a spy named Eopa,
came to his chief and said :

“ What would you bestow upon the man who
should slay King Aurelius ? ”

"Oh, might I but find such a man!" exclaimed Pascent, "I would give him a thousand pounds of silver and make him a captain of my army."

"I am that man," answered Eopa. "I can speak the British tongue and am skilled in all manner of poisons, both swift and slow. Confirm what you have said by an oath, and I will rid you of your enemy for ever."

"I swear," said Pascent, and a bargain was struck.

Eopa shaved off his beard, tonsured his head and put on a monk's habit (for it was chiefly the monks who practised leechcraft or the art of healing), and having provided himself with a stock of simples, cinnamon and ginger, such as the holy men used in compounding their cordials and warm comforting drinks, he set out for Winchester. On arriving he knocked at the castle gate and greeted the porter with a pious greeting, saying in the British tongue :

"I am a learned leech, the most skilled in all the land in the properties of drugs; and Uther, meeting me in the way, has sent me to his brother, King Aurelius, for I know of a sovereign cure for his malady."

The porter, seeing his array of gallipots and phials, admitted him gladly, knowing that his master was in sore need of more skilful treatment.

Meantime Uther and his troops were marching at full speed through Wales. Merlin accompanied them to aid the young duke with his counsel; for he loved the sons of Constantine, and Uther perhaps even more than Aurelius.

It was warm August weather, so they rested during the heat of the day and resumed their march in the cool of the evening. One night, on emerging from the forest into an open plain they beheld the sky lit up by a blazing meteor; or it may have been the comet now known as Halley's Comet, with its long train of golden haze. Terror fell on all ranks, since the Britons never doubted that this was a sign from Heaven, portending some dire calamity. To their imaginative eyes, it assumed the shape of a fiery dragon out of whose mouth darted a ray of brilliant light, of such length that it reached right over the sea, towards the land of Gaul.

Uther at once sent for Merlin and besought him to interpret the meaning of this marvellous star. For a long time the wizard made no answer but stood rigid, staring at vacancy. At last he breathed deeply, then cried in a lamentable voice as the tears rolled down his cheeks :

"Oh woe! Oh irreparable loss! Aurelius has died this night, and Britain is orphaned of her king and father."

On hearing these words, sorrow and consternation filled all hearts, but Uther was loth to believe this interpretation. "Why then, should the sign take the form of a dragon?" he inquired, "and what can such a shape betoken?"

"The fiery dragon is yourself," answered Merlin, "and betokens that you shall be king of Britain; the fiery ray issuing from its mouth signifies a son that shall be born to you whose dominions shall

extend over all those realms that lie beneath the ray. Hasten, therefore, most noble duke, to do battle with King Gilloman and the victory shall be yours."

Full of doubt and dread, Uther hurried forward and soon drove back the hordes of ragged Irish and the Saxon freebooters ; some leapt into the sea and were drowned, others swam to their ships, and both Gilloman and Pascent were slain. But on his return march to Winchester the prince was met by horsemen riding in hot haste ; they came to greet their new king and to announce the death of Aurelius. He had died, they said, after drinking a potion mixed by the hand of a strange monk who had since escaped and could nowhere be found.

Aurelius is dead ! The news sounded like a thunder-clap over the land. Eopa, since Pascent could never pay him that ill-earned thousand pounds of silver, fled for his reward up to the north where the sons of Hengist dwelt beyond the Roman Wall on the tract of land that King Aurelius had granted them after their surrender at York with dust on their heads and chains on their hands. The two brawny chiefs laughed aloud for joy.

"Aha !" they cried, "there is none now to compel us to remain in this desolate waste ! Now we will regain our city of York and the fertile lands that Vortigern bestowed upon our father !" So they despatched messengers in their long-boats to carry the glad tidings over to Germany and to invite more of their countrymen to join them.

But among the Britons there was loud wailing and

bitter tears while their good king was carried, as he had wished, by bishops and book-learned men to his grave within the circle of the Giants' Dance.

Uther had loved his brother very dearly and would have mourned for him many more days but for the pressing needs of the coming struggle with the Saxons. He was crowned in haste at Winchester and, as he stood among his people in his dark, splendid beauty inherited from his Roman mother, they shouted for joy that Fate had still spared them a prince of the royal line to lead them in battle.

Uther often pondered deeply over the words of Merlin as to the future glory of his race, heralded by the fiery dragon; so, to commemorate that bright and wonderful star, he caused two dragons to be carved, all of red gold set with precious gems. He made an offering of the one to the church at Winchester, but the other was to serve as his standard in battle, borne before him on a spear. His helmet, too, of gilded steel was crested with a dragon, and thus he obtained his famous surname of Pendragon, or the Dragon's Head.

In the meantime the Saxon foes were pouring over the wall of Hadrian into the fields of Yorkshire, and landing from overseas on the eastern coasts; but they soon found that they had slain one king only to raise up another even more swift and terrible. The Britons rallied round Pendragon, and his golden ensign, blazing like a meteor in the thickest of the fight, roused them to prodigies of valour. His fiery zeal was seconded by the experience of his kinsman

Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall, a war-worn veteran, not given to making long speeches as the Britons were only too apt to do, but prompt in action. After many a hard-fought fight, these two valiant leaders drove the Saxons back to Germany, but the sons of Hengist were led captive to London, where they were imprisoned in the Tower under a guard of twelve knights.

The festival of Easter was approaching and Uther Pendragon proclaimed a high court to celebrate his victories. Never since the time of the Roman pro-consuls had the castle walls looked down on a scene of so much splendour as now when the young king, wearing his crown, received the homage of his lieges. Many of the nobles had brought their wives and daughters to grace the solemnity and the feast that followed; these ladies were attired in the rich silks and jewels that the high-born Roman dames had taught them how to wear, and loveliest among them all, like a tall, white lily among the meaner beauties of the garden, shone Igerne the Fair, the proud, young wife of the Duke of Cornwall.

Alas, we now come to a shameful chapter in the history of Uther Pendragon, and his glory is sadly tarnished by his base conduct towards Duke Gorlois. Forgetting all ties of kinship and of gratitude, he made war upon his brave comrade-in-arms and compassed his death for the love of the beautiful Igerne. Merlin, too, was not without blame, he could refuse Uther nothing, and instead of reproving, he aided him by his magic arts. By means of a power-

ful spell he so beguiled the widowed duchess, "the truest and fairest of women," that she surrendered the castle of Tintagel and consented to marry King Uther.

For a little while they were happy and had two children; Arthur and Anna. This was that Arthur so renowned in song and story, whose coming, so all believed, had been heralded by the flaming dragon star. On the day that he was born at Tintagel, all the fairies, it was said, assembled round his cradle bringing their choicest gifts of health, beauty, riches, valour and renown, to shower upon the sleeping infant. And Merlin, gazing in the baby-face, was inspired by the spirit of prophecy as he foresaw all the glories that were to befall his nation by means of this wondrous child; and taking him in his arms, he uttered a song so wild and strange that all who heard were filled with holy dread.

But troubles descended thick and fast upon Uther Pendragon, whether as a punishment for his crime who can tell? He was stricken by a lingering disease and could no longer keep the quarrelsome nobles in check, who, released from his strong hand, fought among themselves; the sons of Hengist bribed their gaolers, who allowed them to escape in an open boat down the Thames; they got away safely to Germany whence they returned with fresh swarms of Saxons, and there was now no Gorlois at the King's side to aid him with prudent counsel and valiant sword. In vain Uther appointed his son-in-law, Lot of Lodonesia, to lead his armies; the great nobles

laughed the regent to scorn and refused to follow him in battle.

At last the dying King, unable to bear the desolation of his bleeding country, roused himself to a final effort and hurling bitter reproaches at his vassals, summoned them to follow *him*, Pendragon ! They obeyed the call, and Uther, almost too weak to move, had himself carried in a horse litter at the head of his army that marched to the re-capture of St. Albans, a city that the Saxons had taken. When the barbarians heard of his coming they laughed in their great, deep chests, calling him the "half-dead king," "the Drake Head." "Has the lame man come to knock us down with his crutch ? " they asked.

Nevertheless King Uther, lying in his litter and wrung with pain, directed the assault so skilfully that St. Albans was stormed and taken, and the Saxons fled in dismay, leaving the sons of Hengist dead among the smoking ruins.

When Pendragon saw the issue of the fight he sat up lightly as though suddenly restored to health, and laughed aloud, exclaiming :

"The Saxons call me the half-dead king, do they ? But I would rather be half-dead and conquer *them*, than whole and sound and they conquer *me*, for death with honour is better than life with shame."

He was carried to a Roman villa on the outskirts of the city, where he took up his head-quarters. There was a fountain in the centre of the courtyard, and one day the sick man fancied a draught of its clear, sparkling waters ; but after drinking it he was

seized with mortal agony. Then his chamber-knights remembered that the day before, six beads-men clad in grey, had come begging for alms; they were, no doubt, Saxon spies who had poisoned the well.

Knowing himself to be dying, Uther desired to send a last message to his son Arthur who was in Brittany, being educated at the court of the duke.

"I bid thee," he dictated, "maintain good laws, defend thy kingdom and drive the Saxons out of the land. And may the mild Son of God be to thee in aid."

King Uther was buried beside his brother Aurelius within the Giants' Dance, and many recalled a prophecy of Merlin that both the sons of Constantine should die by poison.

As for the renowned Enchanter, he had died mad, distracted by the miseries of his beloved country. He wandered away, singing songs to the music of his harp, and was found dead on the bank of a river.

But according to Breton legends Merlin lived to the days of King Arthur and was "assotted" by Nimue, one of the damosels of the Lake. She beguiled him of the secret of a powerful charm and by this means imprisoned him for ever in a cave under a rock. Another legend tells us that she confined him in an oak-tree in the forest of Broceliand, and though his voice might sometimes be heard, he was never seen again.

XII.

CADWALLO.

“ The Brazen Horse and Man shall watch the chief
gate of London whether the people wake or sleep ’

Prophecy of Merlin.

A.D. 585-635. ONE stormy winter night a woman, closely muffled in cloak and hood, made her way up the narrow street of King Cadvan’s city of Worcester. She was accompanied by a serving-man clad in a rough sheepskin jerkin and carrying a heavy bundle in his arms, while a second man, bearing a lantern, walked a little in advance. All three wayfarers were bespattered with mud, and the woman dragged herself along with painful effort. Her strength was almost exhausted and she was sick at heart; for she had been on foot for many days, having come from the rude North by ill-paved roads full of deep ruts and pools, and through desolate wastes that had once been thriving farms and villages.

More than forty years had passed away since the death of the great King Arthur, when the traitor Mordred had connived at the return of the Saxon foe, the terrible White Dragon that was never, never to be driven out again. During that time the barbarians had steadily kept on conquering province

after province, burning and slaying, burning and slaying, till the walled cities with their stately churches and monasteries, and the pleasant Roman villas were reduced to charred ruins. It is sad to think of all the priceless, beautiful things that were destroyed by such senseless savagery, leaving us hardly any traces of the great Roman people who once occupied our island. Well might the historian Gildas speak of his unhappy country as given over to the flashing of swords and the crackling of flames.

Though the invaders had made themselves masters of the north-eastern half of Roman Britain and were fast turning it into Saxon England, there were still kings of the ancient British race in the south and west ; and Cadvan, king of Gwynnedd (North Wales), who had lately been crowned with the crown of Arthur, still called himself overlord of the island. During a brief interval of peace he had even made a friendly alliance with Ella of Deira (a kingdom of Northumbria), who had married a British princess.

On arriving at the castle, once a Roman fort, the man with the lantern knocked at the gate and craved admittance, but the porter, peering through the dim light, eyed the stranger with some suspicion, for his features and rough attire proclaimed his Saxon nationality. The lady, however, drawing back her hood, advanced, saying in the British tongue :

“Tell the King that his kinswoman, daughter of Ennian, prince of Gwynnedd, and widow of King Ella, implores his protection for herself and her

infant son who are driven from Northumbria by the usurper Ethelfrith."

The porter hesitated ; her accent and noble bearing partly confirmed the truth of her words, though her tall form drooped and her face was haggard with fatigue and privation, and after some further parley he unfastened the massive bars to admit the little party. One of the knights on duty went to inform the King, and the lady, turning to her servant, held out her arms for his burden ; she clasped it to her breast, and a woollen fold falling back, revealed the bright curls of a sleeping child.

The knight on returning bade her follow him, and as he led the way through court and corridor to the King's quarters, the warmth diffused by hot-air pipes was grateful to her chilled and aching limbs after the bitter January wind. The traces of Roman civilization that greeted her on every side reminded her of her youth before she left her father's roof for King Ella's rude housekeeping at York ; yet she sighed wistfully, knowing that the life of gracious ease to which they bore witness was all too swiftly passing away beyond recall.

King Cadvan sat in the Queen's apartment before a fire of blazing logs that lit up the frescoed walls and added a deeper glow to the ruddy silken pillows on which his head reclined ; while under the lamplight the Queen and one of her maidens employed themselves in spinning.

The fugitive on being ushered in, would have flung herself at the King's feet, but he raised her gently

with words of kindly welcome, and the Queen, putting aside her wheel, rose and kissed her. She took the child in her arms and gave him to the waiting-woman, then led the weary mother to the hearth, where she knelt beside her, chafing her numbed hands and feet. Food and wine soon revived her, and while she ate, the waiting-maid divested the boy of his outer wrappings and set him on the floor. He was now wide-awake, but instead of crying at finding himself amid such strange surroundings, he gazed from one face to the other with round blue eyes full of wonder. He was a sturdy youngster of about three years old, with the fair hair and colouring of his race; there was, too, already something proud and masterful in the pose of the firm white body. His mother watched him with sad, adoring eyes, and the Queen, bending over him, lifted each golden curl with a tender hand.

"He is the same age as our little Cadwallo," she said softly to her husband.

"His name is Edwin," said the mother. "A few short weeks ago he was the heir of Northumbria, but is now fatherless and an outcast."

Little by little she told her piteous tale, one that was only too common in those days of violence and crime; how Ella had been slain in battle by Ethelfrith of impious renown; and how Ethelfrith after seizing upon the kingdom, had driven her and her innocent child into exile under pain of death should they ever return. Cadvan listened, full of sorrow; yet did not promise to help his kinswoman to regain her son's lost inheritance, for he was unwilling to make

war against the powerful Ethelfrith ; all he could do was to offer the shelter of his court to the widow and orphan.

“Stay with me and be to me as a sister,” said the gentle Queen.

So the exiles remained in the household of King Cadvan, and the little Edwin was brought up with the King’s son Cadwallo. The two boys grew to love each other like brothers ; there was no difference made in their education, the Saxon being treated in all respects like a prince of the blood royal.

When the playmates were old enough, King Cadvan sent them, according to custom, to be educated in the household of a friendly prince ; he chose that of Salamon, Duke of Brittany, for among the British kings the politeness of Arthur’s time was almost forgotten owing to the incessant wars, and most of the learned men had taken refuge with Salamon.

This duke loved the two young princes like his own sons, especially Cadwallo, a lively, brilliant boy, with all the charm for which his race was so famous. He was a stern ruler ; yet stern though he might be to others, Cadwallo could always amuse him by his merry pranks and was permitted to speak to him much more familiarly than any of the other pages. Edwin was of a thoughtful, serious disposition, and as the years went by he showed himself to be strong and resolute, eager to learn and keen in studying the art of war. Duke Salamon was careful to have the princes instructed in all knightly accomplishments, and always took them hunting and hawking with

him, but Edwin loved best to ride by his side whenever there was any fighting going on between Brittany and the bordering nations.

When the youths were on the threshold of manhood King Cadvan sent messengers to fetch them back to Britain, and after taking an affectionate leave of their kind duke, they set sail. But on arriving at Hamo's Port (Southampton), the playmates parted, for Edwin had his own dreams and ambitions.

Nevertheless Edwin, on taking leave of his adopted brother, looked at him enviously and said

"Brother, you are going to be King of Gwynnedd and overlord of Britain, while I am disinherited and an outcast. Yet I pray you grant me this one boon: if ever I should recover the kingdom of Ella, my father, and reign in Northumbria, give me leave to wear a crown and be equal in dignity with yourself."

Cadwallo, who was of a generous nature, thoughtlessly promised, never reflecting that the crown of Britain was no mere diadem but the symbol of a power that was not his own to bestow.

So the princes went each his separate way on the path of life, and shortly afterwards, on the death of Cadvan, Cadwallo was crowned king.

Edwin returned to his own people and was hospitably entertained by Redwald, a Saxon chief. For some years he wandered about among the East Anglians, always biding his time and working towards his end. His education and military training had made him a great leader, and owing to his love of learning,

inherited perhaps from his British mother, he was greatly superior in intellect to his boorish countrymen. He soon gained great influence among them and a large following. When at last the powerful Ethelfrith died, Edwin declared war upon his sons. He invaded Deira with his followers, killed the two sons of Ethelfrith in battle, and made himself master of the kingdom.

So Edwin regained his inheritance and soon showed himself to be as wise and skilful in government as in warfare. He brought such order into Northumbria and punished robbers so severely that an unarmed man, or even a woman or child, with a bag of gold, could travel in safety over the length and breadth of the land. He and his queen, Ethelburga, were both Christians, so he restored the churches and built St. Peter's in the city of York. He was bountiful to the poor and caused clear water to be conveyed in pipes along the high-roads, with brazen cups and fountains, so that all might drink. But the story of the great deeds of Edwin and how he became king of all Northumbria and head of all the other Saxon chiefs, can be read in the history of England.

But as yet Edwin had no crown; he was, in fact, a "bretwalda" rather than an over-king, and it fretted his proud spirit to have to acknowledge Cadwallo, the friend of his childhood, as his superior lord. He frequently sent messengers to Cadwallo, reminding him of his promise to grant him leave to wear a crown; but the cares of State had transformed the careless, laughing boy into a grave and

cautious man, and the British king had long since repented of this promise. At last Cadwallo sent back word that they would discuss the matter, and appointed a day for the meeting and a trysting-place on the banks of the river Douglas, in Lancashire. Both kings, with a large retinue of followers, repaired to the husting (for so the Saxons called it), and Cadwallo also brought with him his sister's son, a very noble youth named Brian.

It was a warm summer's day and the conference was long and heated. The Britons delighted in making long speeches and the Saxons were very stubborn and hard to convince, so at mid-day, when the meeting was adjourned, no decision was arrived at. Cadwallo, weary of so much talking and arguing, rowed across the river to rest awhile, accompanied by Brian, who loved him with a surpassing devotion; for among his many gifts Cadwallo had the power of inspiring great affection.

The King lay down to rest on a grassy slope with his head pillowed on Brian's knees. Presently he fell asleep, and as he slept the younger prince gazed over land and river, thinking sadly of the time when all these pleasant fields had belonged to his own countrymen. Tears gathered in his eyes and rolled in great drops down his cheeks. They rained upon the sleeper's face as the youth, bending over him, fondly parted the hair back from brow and temples. Cadwallo awoke and looked up in surprise, for at first he thought it was a summer shower, but when he saw his nephew weeping he asked in a tone of reproof :

“Why hast thou taken a lady’s manners? What mean these womanish tears?”

“I weep,” answered the boy, “for the unhappy people and land of Britain. Will you now suffer these barbarians to have a king on equal terms with yourself? By giving Edwin a crown you give him the power to act as he lists without asking leave of you, his overlord; you give him power to invite over more and more of his kinsfolk until we are all utterly destroyed. Ever since Vortigern took these Ambrones into his service they have not ceased to betray and to encroach. It was they who slaughtered the princes at St. Ambrus, who poisoned Aurelius and Uther. Next they broke faith with Arthur, and since that time they have devastated the land, driving us before them.”

Cadwallo, as he listened, grew more and more thoughtful, bitterly reproaching himself for his want of foresight in making such a promise and for his foolish good-nature in coming to the conference. Calling one of his knights to him he said:

“Row over the river and say to King Edwin that I will not return to the husting since I must refuse his petition, for it is against all the ancient customs of the island that a crown should be worn by two kings at the same time”

The knight rowed over the river and went with his message to the Saxon camp. On hearing it King Edwin rose, terrible in his wrath, and shook his fist in the messenger’s face.

“Nithing!” he cried, “Nithing! Does Cadwallo

dare to send such a message to me? By the Lord that made the daylight and by the halidom of Rome, I will not only have his crown but his head under it!"

Then gathering his followers together, he broke up the husting and marched away.

War followed. Well had it been for Britain if King Cadvan had turned both mother and child adrift that winter night. Little did he foresee all the disaster that that blue-eyed babe was to bring upon his house. Edwin, forgetting all the love and pity shown to his helpless infancy, marched over Cadwallo's borders and ravaged his country. He sacked the city of Worcester and took many prisoners back with him to York. Among them was Brian's sister, a young girl named Galarne, who was made a waiting-woman in the household of Queen Ethelburga.

But Cadwallo and Brian both fled to Ireland, where King Gillepatric furnished them with men and ships to carry on the war. They sailed back to Britain, but on approaching Milford Haven, whom should they see to their surprise but Edwin and his Saxons standing on the shore? The Britons tried to land, but Edwin drove them back into the sea, sinking many of their ships and drowning their crews. Cadwallo sailed away and steered his course for the harbour of Totnes; but there again they found Edwin and his Saxons ready to prevent their landing. Baffled and bewildered, Cadwallo sailed up and down the coast, trying port after port, but all in vain: Edwin was always there!

Half his fleet was sunk, yet Cadwallo would have

made one more attempt to land had not Brian dissuaded him.

"It is of no use," he said, shaking his head. "There is some wizardry at work. It is no doubt some cunning sleight of the sorcerer Pellitus who is, they say, almost as powerful as the renowned Merlin. He has lately come from Spain, so I have heard, and taken service with Edwin."

"If that is so," answered Cadwallo in despair, "it is indeed useless. I can fight against Edwin well enough, but not against the powers of darkness."

It was, as Brian suspected, the work of some unknown power. This Pellitus was an extremely gifted man, learned in the flight of birds and in the courses of the stars. He knew all the lore of the winds and of the moon, of the deepest recesses of the broad sea and the secrets of the dark earth: "of the fish where he swims, of the worm where he creeps." He had, moreover, a magic mirror of glass or polished metal in which he beheld reflected all that was passing by land and sea. He could see Cadwallo's ships in the distance, and so was able to give Edwin timely warning of their approach. No wonder Edwin valued his magician above a king's ransom and took his advice in all things.

Cadwallo therefore decided to make no further attempt at landing for the present, but to sail instead to Brittany, to seek the help and counsel of his friend, Duke Salamon. But even now fresh disasters awaited him, for a violent storm arose in the Narrow Sea and scattered his fleet in all directions. The

pilot of the King's ship was obliged to let her drift. and after tossing about all night long they were driven upon the coast of Guernsey.

Here Cadwallo, tormented in mind and body, fell very ill and lay for three days delirious with fever. But the faithful Brian nursed him in that desert island with a devotion beyond belief, and gladly risked his own life to save that of his beloved uncle.

At last they resumed their voyage and landed in safety near Dinant. The good Duke received them very kindly; he was now growing old and hardly recognized the sad, care-worn Cadwallo as the laughing, mischievous page of former years. He was grieved to hear of his misfortunes and very indignant at Edwin's base ingratitude.

"And yet," he said, "it is marvellous to me how the Saxons, a people we make no account of in Brittany, should be able to overcome the Britons, even to driving out their lawful king. Other people are able to defend their realms, why not the Britons? Surely they are now a much feebler folk than their forefathers."

Cadwallo felt ashamed on hearing these words, for they seemed to imply cowardice in himself and his countrymen, and he tried to excuse them by saying that God in His wrath thought fit to punish the Britons; but he overlooked the real cause, the inveterate quarrelsomeness of their leaders, which prevented their uniting against a common foe.

Nevertheless Duke Salamon loved the land of his ancestors: in Arthur's time Brittany had shared her

glory and must now help her in her affliction, so he agreed to furnish Cadwallo with men and ships.

"But they will be of no avail," said Brian, "while Edwin's wizard still lives. I will, therefore, go on ahead and compass his death."

They remained in Brittany all the winter, and in the spring Brian, furnished with money from the Duke, departed secretly for Britain. He landed at Hamo's Port, where some of his friends met him; and from them he learnt that Edwin was then keeping his court at York; the magician Pellitus was there also, for his master would never be parted from him. The friends had horses ready, so they all rode up to the North together. For seven days they journeyed, and when they were as yet some miles from their destination they encountered a pilgrim, very ragged and travel-stained, who was begging for alms. Brian, struck with a sudden idea, called a halt.

"Change clothes with me, holy man," he said, offering him money.

The wayfarer consented, so the prince dismounting, took off his gay cloak and tunic and donned the pilgrim's habit. He loathed the feel of the coarse hair-cloth, dusty and foul as it was, "for he was not born to that." Nevertheless he had gone through too many hardships to stick at trifling discomforts, so he stained his face a dirty brown, drew on the sandals, and taking the beads and staff, bade his friends wait at the cross-roads for his return.

He continued his journey on foot, and on coming to the next village he inquired out a blacksmith's

forge. The smith, who was very skilful at his craft, fashioned him a sharp steel spike and fixed it to one end of the pilgrim's staff. Thus provided, the prince went on his way.

Edwin, as we have said, was a kind ruler to his own Saxons, and his queen, Ethelburga, was very charitable to the poor. It was the custom for a crowd of beggars to assemble every morning in the courtyard of the castle, where a dole of bread was distributed, generally by Pellitus, to whom the King gave the charge of every thing in his household.

One morning a weary pilgrim, very ragged and footsore, leaning heavily on his staff, might be seen mingling with the throng of almsmen before King Edwin's door. These poor people were all pushing and jostling each other in their eagerness to be the foremost for the dole of bread, and the pilgrim looked about him for a good place.

As he walked to and fro a young girl, one of the Queen's maids, came out of the great hall with an ewer in her hand and made her way to a fountain in a more distant part of the courtyard. The pilgrim followed her and stood beside her as she drew the water.

"Galarne," he said in a low voice. The girl started and almost let the jug fall in her surprise. His face was grimy and unshorn, overhung with matted locks, but there were tears in his dark eyes. She knew them for the eyes of her brother Brian and uttered a stifled cry. They would have rushed into each other's arms, but restrained their joy, knowing only

too well that Edwin would show little mercy if the pretended pilgrim were discovered. With a strong effort Galarne recovered calmness, and taking a brooch from her bosom, said in the Saxon language :

"God be mild to thee, poor man ! Have this gold and buy thee food, and garments to protect thee from the cold." Brian answered in the same speech :

"God reward thee that thou givest succour to the lame man." But in a low tone, in their own British tongue, he informed her of his errand, and lifting his hand slightly, disclosed the gleam of the steel spike.

"Thou art weary and for-wandered," she answered aloud in Saxon, pointing with her hand to the various buildings in the courtyard, as if directing the pilgrim as to the best place to stand, but under her breath she added :

"That is Pellitus," as just then Queen Ethelburga issued from the hall followed by a tall dark man in flowing robes, and by servants carrying jugs and baskets.

The magician began to range the poor folk in rows ; and Brian moved forward to take his place, but his sister looked at him wistfully. He could see by her face that she was very unhappy in her servitude and he longed to take her away with him ; so he murmured as he passed by her :

"I cannot leave thee thus. Watch for the opportunity to steal from thy chamber to-night and come to St. Peter's Church. I will be waiting for thee under the dark arches near, and we will flee away together."

So saying he left her to join the hungry crowd that surrounded Pellitus. Presently, seeing an opening, he slipped through and found himself quite close to the wizard. Suddenly he raised his arm and with the spiked end of his staff struck Pellitus full in the breast. Not waiting to pull it out, he let go the staff and fell back into the press, so swiftly that his dark habit was at once lost to view.

A great cry went up as the Spaniard fell, and in the rushing to and fro Brian reached the gate unnoticed. He got safely away, but not a moment too soon; for Edwin, hearing the cry, ran out of the hall. He was just in time to see his most precious magician breathe his last, for the blow had been struck with such force that the steel point had pierced his heart.

Edwin stood for a moment transfixed with horror, then looking round he thundered :

"Shut the gates instantly! Let not the assassin escape!" This was done forthwith, and watchers were placed round the courtyard and in every hidden corner, so that no one could go in or out. Galarne, in an agony of fear, had seen her brother escape, and remained all that night, sleepless and trembling, in her narrow little room, on the look-out for some chance to slip away and join him. But in vain; every postern, every outlet was closely guarded; she dared not make the attempt, knowing it would be certain death.

Brian reached St. Peter's Church in safety and hid himself, as he had promised, under the dark arches. There he waited hour after hour for Galarne, but she

never came. He remained there all the rest of the day and all that night, but at sunrise, afraid to stay any longer, he fled away, though it wrung his heart to leave his sister in captivity. He could not forget her sad, imploring face; but there was no time to think of his own grief, and he was all on fire to convey the joyful news to Cadwallo that he had compassed the death of their arch-enemy.

He found his friends waiting for him at the cross-roads, and they all rode back in haste to the South. Messengers were sent over the sea to Brittany, and Brian set up Cadwallo's standard—the Red Dragon—at Exeter, summoning the British chiefs to rally round their king.

But Edwin was in despair at the loss of his sorcerer. In vain he peered into the magic mirror: it revealed nothing, for only the eyes of an adept could read its depths aright. Yet some relate that on the death of Pellitus it shivered all to pieces; others, that Edwin smashed it in his rage. So it happened that when Cadwallo landed at Hamo's Port from Brittany, with ten thousand men, he found no Edwin standing on the shore, ready to sink his ships and drown his crews.

Soon the country was in a blaze of war once more. Edwin too, raised his standard—a tuft of feathers fixed on a spear—and called upon the Saxon chiefs to join him, but ere they could do so Cadwallo had swept up to Northumbria. The two armies met at Heathfield near Doncaster, and in the fierce, short fight that followed Edwin was slain. So there was

an end of all his pride and ambition, and Queen Ethelburga caused his head to be buried in the church of St. Peter that he had built.

In the confusion that followed upon his death Galarne escaped from the slavery so hateful to her proud spirit. According to a fairy-tale, she fled into a neighbouring forest and was rescued by a magic horse of bronze that Brian sent to her aid ; but no doubt it was a real horse that carried the princess in safety back to her own people.

After his victory at Heathfield, Cadwallo, desperate to avenge the wrongs of his bleeding country, ravaged the lands of the Saxons, fighting battle after battle and subduing chief after chief till he forced them to acknowledge him once more as their overlord. He regained possession of the ancient city of London, and for a brief hour it seemed to the Britons that their great Arthur Pendragon had come back to them. They had always refused to believe that he was dead ; he was only sleeping, they said, in his island-valley of Avalon, ready to awake and defend his Britain in her hour of need. Oh, surely he had now arisen, and would not only overcome, but utterly drive out the White Dragon !

It was a proud day for the Britons when King Cadwallo held his court at Whitsuntide in his city of London. He wore the crown of Arthur, and British princes and Saxon chiefs alike knelt before him and paid him homage.

But such glory was short-lived, for a few months later Cadwallo was mortally wounded in the battle

of Hevenfield and all the fond hopes of the Britons faded like a dream.

He was conveyed to his city of London, and as the beloved Brian hung over him weeping, the dying king murmured :

“ I go the way of all flesh, but my spirit fain would linger to fight for and guard my Britons. Bury me not in the earth, I pray you, but let a brazen image be wrought, and set me up on high so that I may still strike terror into these barbarous foes who dreaded me while living.” For it was a very general belief among the Britons that so long as the body remained unburied the spirit hovered near.

So Brian sent for the most skilled artificers that were to be found in Brittany, and ordered them to cast a hollow brazen figure of the exact shape of the dead king. When this was done, the body of Cadwallo, that had been embalmed with sweet-smelling spices and condiments, was enclosed within it and seated upon Brian’s wonderful brazen charger.

This statue was set up over the Lud Gate, and so for many years Cadwallo sat keeping watch and ward over his beloved city.

But he could not guard it from foes within the gates, and from the folly of his countrymen who wasted their strength in incessant civil wars instead of making common cause against the invading Saxon. His son, Cadwallader, a pious but feeble prince, was more fitted to be a monk than a king, and was unable to cope with the turbulence of the nobles. The Saxons landed in ever increasing numbers, and were

only checked by a terrible pestilence that devastated the south of the island, slaying Britons by the thousand, so that the living were not enough to bury the dead. Many fled to the mountains of the west, and at last Cadwallader in his despair collected the miserable remnant of his followers, resolved to seek the friendly shores of Brittany. They embarked at Southampton, and as the ships left the harbour the unhappy Britons crowding the decks watched the disappearing shores of their beloved island, while "under the folds of the sails" they chanted mournfully, "Thou hast given us, O God, even as sheep to the slaughter and among the nations hast thou scattered us." Thus the plague was stayed for want of victims; and after a while the sturdy Saxons, now unopposed, took possession of the country, Loegria no more, but England; the White Dragon had overcome the Red. In the words of the dying Arthur:

"The old order changeth, giving place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

NOTES

P. 1, l. 7. **Loegria**, or **Llwgria**, the British name for England.

P. 3, l. 24. the **Morini**, Gauls whose country lay between the Scheldt and the Somme; Belgians.

P. 7, l. 10. **vikings**, sea rovers; no connection with "king."

P. 8, l. 27. **admiral**, originally the ship that carried the commander of the fleet; hence the commander himself.

P. 12, l. 14 **Caer Ebrauc**. "Caer," British for "city"; founded by Ebrauc, fifth king of Britain, from whose name the Latin "Eboracum" (York) is said to be derived.

P. 17, l. 27. **kirtle**, a close-fitting gown; generally worn with a train or over-dress.

P. 21, l. 14 **Kings of Brentford**, should be "Kings at Brentford," but the phrase is too time-honoured to be corrected. The jovial character of Behn gave rise to some confusion, so that a king of Brentford grew to mean a sort of Old King Cole or Roi d'Yvetot, an equally jolly old soul.

P. 21, l. 26 the **Allia**, a tributary of the Tiber; the battle there was fought B.C. 390

P. 21, l. 29. **Woe to the vanquished**, in Latin *Vae victis*; a very famous quotation.

P. 22, l. 2 **believe what we like**. Even that severe critic of Geoffrey's *Histories*, William Camden the antiquary, and many other scholars are of opinion that the Gaulish leader was probably a Briton, "Brennus" not being a proper name but the latinized form of "brennin," a British word signifying "king."

P. 24, l. 13. **Calaterrum**, perhaps the forest of Gaultres in the North Riding of Yorkshire.

P. 31, l. 28. **Carlisle**, or **Caer Leil**, founded by Leil, seventh king of Britain and father of King Hudibras.

P. 32, l. 2. **between Calais and Boulogne**; at **Itius Portus**, a Roman stronghold.

P. 32, l. 11. **Lud**, or **Lyd**, still survives in various local names, **Lydd** in Kent, **Lydney** and **Lydbrook** in Gloucestershire

P. 33, l. 31. **Androgeus and Tenuantius.** Statues of King Lud and his two sons stood on the Ludgate as late as the eighteenth century. Androgeus is surmised to have been the young Manubratius befriended by Caesar; Tenuantius was the father of Lymbelne.

P. 34, l. 4. **his youngest brother, Nyniaw,** which Geoffrey latinizes as Ninnius or Nennius; often confused with Nennius, author of *Historia Britonum*.

P. 34, l. 16. **Greek.** According to Rice Holmes (*Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*) there is evidence to prove that not only the Druids but many of the more civilized Britons could read and write, and that they employed the Greek character.

P. 35, l. 18. **Behn;** perhaps not a proper name but "beli," meaning a general. Caswallon is spoken of as Beli Maur or commander-in-chief.

P. 35, l. 26 **Swart Ivernians, or Hibernians,** the earlier inhabitants of Britain. They were short, dark and curly-haired. Though an inferior race to the Celts, the latter seem to have adopted their Druidical religion and their custom of staining the skin with woad.

P. 36, l. 21. **peytrels, breastplates.**

P. 38, l. 16. **Yellow Death** Whether this fatal property was due to magic or to a poisoned blade the chroniclers do not say.

P. 40, l. 14 **cock-fighting.** Caesar mentions this favourite pastime of the Britons.

P. 41, l. 13 **a landmark.** Some pillar or obelisk popularly connected with Ninnius (Eng. *Ninny*) may have existed as late as Shakespeare's time. See *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where Pyramus says: "Wilt thou at Ninny's Tomb meet me straight-way?" instead of "Ninus"; no doubt an intentional mistake for the sake of the local allusion.

P. 42 **Saint Ursula.** History, though telling us all about the Roman conquest and how our island became the Roman province of Britannia, says very little about the conversion of the Britons to Christianity. There is a tradition that Lucius, a Romanized British king (A.D. 156), after reading about the martyrdom of St. Peter, wrote a letter begging for instruction to Eleutherius, Bishop of Rome, who, in answer to this petition, sent over two missionaries, Fagan and Duvian. The Britons received the new faith with great enthusiasm, and during the persecution by the Emperor Diocletian many suffered martyrdom, one of the first being St. Alban. After the conversion of the Emperor Constantine Christianity became the State religion, and Britain was divided into twenty-eight bishoprics and three archbishoprics.

(London, York and Caerleon-upon-Usk). The Britons never tried to convert the heathen Saxons; they left that to St. Augustine, and though the two churches became united after the Synod of Whitby (664), we must not forget how very much more ancient the Church of Wales is than the Church of England.

P. 45, l. 27. *Gildas*, a British monk of the sixth century. Only a fragment of his history remains.

P. 45, l. 31. *the well-known Roman way*. Tacitus, the Roman historian, thus sarcastically alludes to the methods of his countrymen.

P. 48, l. 6. *Mithras*, the sun-god of the Persians. See Kipling's "Centurion of the Thirtieth" in *Puck of Pook's Hill*.

P. 48, l. 7. *Cybele*, a kind of Nature worship that originated in the Greek colonies of Asia Minor. There is a fine passage in Keats' *Endymion* descriptive of "Mother Cybele."

P. 48, l. 7. *Egyptian Isis*. Her rites were very mystic indeed. The Veil of Isis, it was said, could never be lifted.

P. 50, l. 27. *Tower of Julius Caesar*. The Tower of London stands on this site; it was built by the Normans, not the Romans, as once popularly supposed. Cp. *Richard III*.

"I do not like the Tower;
Did Julius Caesar build this place, my lord?"

P. 52, l. 6. *Guanis the Hun*. The Huns were savage Mongolian tribes that first invaded Europe in the fourth century and afterwards overran the Roman Empire. Their most famous chief was Attila.

P. 56, l. 9. *dedicated to Saint Ursula*. The British chroniclers make no claim of saintship for the princess. Her simple story was afterwards elaborated with the most absurd details by ecclesiastical writers on the Continent, and in the eleventh century she was canonized. In the Roman Catholic calendar the day of Ursula, virgin and martyr, is October 21st; her symbol is a white dove, and she is represented as a beautiful young woman, richly dressed, sheltering a number of young girls under her mantle.

P. 58, l. 8. *Constantine*, a prince of Brittany, descended, through Conan, from the ancient British kings. After the departure of the Romans, Britain fell into a distracted state, and was powerless to resist the inroads of the Picts for want of a strong over-king. At the entreaty of the Archbishop of London, Constantine accepted the crown, but reigned only ten years.

P. 60, l. 10. **dreadful practices**, not confined to heathen Druids. When St. Columba first tried to build the monastery of Iona the walls repeatedly fell down as soon as erected; then the saint, to counteract, as he thought, the work of evil spirits, caused his young friend Oran to be built up alive in the masonry.

P. 61, l. 12. **Ambrose**, Lat. *Ambrosius*. According to Heywood, his "first name" was Merlin, and he assumed the surname of Ambrosius; some say out of deference to his royal patron, Aurelius Ambrosius.

P. 66, l. 13. **moving pictures**, attributed, of course, to magic, but perhaps a cleverly contrived optical illusion. Merlin may be said to have anticipated the modern kinema. He may also have furnished Shakespeare with the idea of the pageant conjured up by Prospero (*Tempest*, Act 4).

P. 68, l. 11 **Some say**, etc. See *Historia Britonum*. "The saint (Germanus of Auxerre) as usual followed him and with his clergy fasted and prayed for three days and as many nights. On the third night, at the third hour, fire fell suddenly from heaven and burnt the castle; Vortigern, the daughter of Hengist, and all the inhabitants perished miserably."

P. 70, l. 15. **cairn of stones** at Coningsburgh on the Don in Yorkshire, pointed out as the tomb of Hengist.

P. 74, l. 1. **sarsens**, more especially the sandstone pillars, as they were more "foreign" than the blue stone; the word "Saracen" being often vaguely used in this sense.

P. 75, l. 1. **St. Bride**, Bridget, the famous Irish saint who lived in the fifth century.

P. 77, l. 30. **trilithon** consists of three pillars, two uprights and one horizontal or cromlech.

P. 81, l. 6 **Halley's Comet** appears every 76 years; called after Edmund Halley the astronomer royal who discovered it in 1682 and predicted its return.

P. 88, l. 3. **Cadvan**, king of North Wales, was chosen by the other British kings as their overlord; by a treaty with the Saxons he greatly extended his dominions, which may account for Worcester being his city.

P. 89, l. 19. **Deira**, from the Humber to the Tees; capital, York.

P. 91, l. 26 **of impious renown** he caused twelve hundred monks and hermits to be massacred at Leicester.

P. 94, l. 15. **Ethelburga**, daughter of Ethelbert the Christian king of Kent. It was partly through her influence that Edwin was converted.

P. 95, l. 5. **Duglas** or Douglas, near Wigan.

P. 95, l. 7. **husting**. In Early English a place of assembly, hence a county court. In modern times an election platform.

P. 96, l. 31. **Nothing**, worthless fellow, fool.

P. 98, l. 19. **a magic murror**. Henry VII., who was deeply learned in the lore of his British ancestors, was said to possess such a mirror that broke in pieces when he died.

P. 99, l. 10. **Dinant** or **Dinan** in Brittany. Geoffrey says they landed at "Kidalet," meaning no doubt St. Malo, the nearest seaport.

P. 102, l. 12. **for-wandered**; cp. "forlorn" = very lorn, "fordone" = done up. "All with weary task fordone" (Shakespeare).

P. 106, l. 8. **a brazen image**. Vortimer, the valiant son of Vortigern, when dying, poisoned by his stepmother Rowena, commanded that his body should not be buried but enclosed in a brazen pyramid, and set up on the seashore, so that his spirit might guard the island from the approach of Saxon ships; his wish however was disregarded.

QUESTIONS AND SUBJECTS FOR ESSAYS

(The numbers in brackets refer to the pages.)

V. THE KINGS OF BRENTFORD.

1. Write some description of a viking ship.
2. Give a short account, from Roman History, of Brennus and his Gauls in the Forum at Rome.
3. Have you read of any other adventurer who became the ruler of his adopted country?
4. Write a short poem or song about jolly King Belin and his housekeeping at Troynovant.
5. Where are the following places: Albany (3), Stavanger (7), Cawdor (11), Burgundy (13), the Brent (21), the Allia (21), Watling Street (22), Caerleon-upon-Usk (22)? For what was this city afterwards famous?
6. Explain the following words: symbol (1), viking (7), admiral (8), incredulous (10), hostage (11), consternation (11), dissension (17), kirtle (17), panoply (18), pageant (21).

VI. THE PIOUS ELIDUR.

7. Contrast the character of Arthgallo in adversity with that of the outlaw Robin Hood, and of the Banished Duke in *As You Like It*.

8. What do you think of the conduct of Elidur? In your opinion did he deserve his surname?

9. Geoffrey speaks of the vassals of the crown (28). Show that this is an anachronism.

10. Explain the following words: unkempt (24), philosophy (25), caparisoned (25), haggard (25), subsided (26), chamberlain (28), avaricious (28), stratagem (29), allegiance (30), prostrate (30), extorted (31), pious (31).

VII. CAESAR'S SWORD.

11. Write some reflections on Caesar standing on the seashore, and gazing across the strait at the white cliffs of Britain.
12. Give some account of Caesar's first landing in Britain from a Roman soldier's point of view.
13. Describe the appearance and accoutrements of a British chief in his war chariot, driving into action.
14. Explain the following words: legionaries (32), tallage (33), leasowes (35), peytrels (35), scabbard (36), harangue (36), catapults (37), trophy (40).
15. Write sentences containing the following words so used as to show their meaning: doughty (32), degenerate (33), sonorous (37), dominant (38), exultant (39), elaborately (41).

VIII. SAINT URSULA.

16. Show how the Romans, after they had outgrown their ancient gods, were searching after some new religion.
17. How was Christianity established in Britain? Did it meet with any opposition?
18. Relate how the Roman province of Armorica became Brittany.
19. Write sentences containing the following words so used as to show their meaning: garrison (43), astrology (44), ministering (45), cloistered (50), raided (52), brigantine (52), irradiated (54), fanatic (55), ruthless (55), commissions (56).

IX. THE RED AND THE WHITE DRAGON.

20. Write, from the History of England, some account of Hengist's daughter, Rowena.
21. Can you remember any instances of cruel and superstitious practices in the Middle Ages?
22. Have you heard of any other hated tyrant being soothed by the music of a young harper?
23. Write sentences containing the following words so used as to show their meaning: elfin (60), reeve (61), askance (58), incantation (59), appraising (62), mage (63), vindictively (64).

X. THE GIANTS' DANCE.

24. Imagining you are a tourist, write a letter to a friend relating an excursion to Stonehenge.

QUESTIONS AND SUBJECTS FOR ESSAYS 115

25. Do you know the story of Hengist's treachery and the massacre at Amesbury?

26. Describe a mediæval king holding his court at the season of Pentecost.

27. Explain the following words: monastery (69), consecrated (70), cairn (70), soothsayer (71), fugitives (71), adept (72), primeval (75), cromlech (75), hawser (75), trilithon (77), lintels (78), rapt (78).

XI. UTHUR PENDRAGON.

28. "When beggars die there are no comets seen,
The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes."
Shakespeare.

Can you mention any instance in History in support of this once prevalent belief?

29. Write a little poem descriptive of the fairies bending over the cradle of the new-born Arthur at Tintagel.

30. What was the Roman name for St. Albans? What historic interest is attached to this city?

31. Explain the following words: tonsure (80), leech (80), meteor (81), comet (81), hordes (82), potion (82), veteran (84), lieges (84), "Drake" (84).

XII. CADWALLO.

32. What do you think of the character of Edwin?

33. Have you read anything about Queen Ethelburga and her efforts to convert her husband Edwin to Christianity?

34. Write an imaginary story of the escape of Galarne back to her own people.

35. Explain the following words: frescoed (90), diadem (93), trysting-place (95), halidom (97), lore (99), dole (101), postern (103), condiments (106).

HELPS TO FURTHER STUDY

Sources. Geoffrey's *Histories*, Wace's *Roman de Brut*, but chiefly Layamon's *Brut*, which is a very free and enlarged translation of Wace's poem; also

v. Holinshed's *Chronicles*; Milton's *Early Britain*. Thackeray's ballad, "The King of Brentford," is merely a translation of Beranger's "Roi d'Yvetot."

vi. *Nobody and Somebody*, an Elizabethan stage-play; Drayton's *Polyolbion*. Read Wordsworth's poem, "The Pious Elidur," to be found in his collected works.

vii. Higgs's *Mirror for Magistrates*; a poem entitled *Nennius, a Worthy Briton* (Harleian MSS., vol 8).

Ancient Britain and Cesar's Invasions, by T. Rice Holmes, and *Celtic Britain*, by Prof Rhys, contain most interesting chapters on the Britons of this period.

viii. Mrs. Jameson's *Sacred and Legendary Art*; Baring Gould's *Lives of the Saints*. It must be remembered, however, that the life of the *saint* differs very greatly from that of the *princess*. The former is best told by pictorial art, for it was a favourite subject with painters; there is a very splendid series by Carpaccio in Venice; another in the Church of St. Ursula at Cologne, and the miniatures adorning the Reliquary of Memling at Bruges.

Read Rudyard Kipling's delightful story, "A Centurion of the Thirtieth," in *Puck of Pook's Hill*, which helps us to realize something of the social life in Roman Britain at the time of the Emperor Maximus.

ix, x, xi. *Historia Britonum*, by Nennius, Abbot of Bangor (ninth century). *Le Roman de Merlin*, 1316; ed Prof. Oskar Sommer. *The Life of Merlin*, by Thomas Heywood, 1641.

xii. The story of Cadwallon in Baring Gould's collection of British Fairy Tales.

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